



BLUE AND GRAY

WEEKLY



Stories of Brave Northern and Southern Boys in the Civil War.

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No. 15.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 18, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

AT PITTSBURG LANDING!

OR, THE BOYS IN BLUE'S GREATEST BATTLE.

By LIEUT HARRY LEE.



In another moment the Blues had reached the rail-fence. Jack Clark was the first to leap over, and shouted: "At them, Blues!" The boys responded with a wild cheer.

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CHAPTER I.

THE MASKED BATTERY.

The fall of Fort Donelson had been a great blow to the Southern cause. In that victory General Grant had laid the foundation of his future career.

It gave to the Union army the practical command of the Tennessee river and at a time when such a command was of great value.

After this began that memorable concentration of both armies, which resulted in a number of terrible battles. The first of these occurred at Pittsburg Landing.

This was a small steamboat landing on the Tennessee river, about 219 miles distant from its mouth and near the intersection of the lines of three States, Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee.

Back of the landing and on a plateau between two creeks was a community known as Shiloh. Heavy forests of oak were prevalent in the region.

General Grant, who had been superseded by General Smith, was not responsible for the movement which resulted in the occupation of Pittsburg Landing.

General Halleck, who was in supreme command of the

Western division, sent forth an order for the Union forces to concentrate at this point.

Sherman came up the Tennessee with his army and the gunboats. Buell was ordered up from Nashville, and Lew Wallace from Crump's Landing.

At this point General Smith fell ill and General Grant was restored to command.

All this while the Confederates under Beauregard were concentrating at Shiloh. From far and near divisions were rushed to the spot.

Bragg came from Pensacola, Polk from the Mississippi, and Johnston from Murfreesborough. Thus the pick and the flower of both armies rushed as by common impulse to the battle fields of Shiloh.

The clouds of battle were gathering rapidly, and when they burst, it was with frightful force, as history records.

Up the Tennessee one afternoon there steamed a small gunboat. On its decks were grouped the members of a little company of infantry.

They were youths of ages from seventeen to twenty-one. They were all boys of good families in the North, and mostly from a town in New York State known as Fairdale.

They had rallied to the first call to arms and were mustered in just prior to the battle of Bull Run, in which they

took part with such credit that they had won the commendation of President Lincoln.

They called themselves the Fairdale Blues. Their captain was Jack Clark, a young man of high character and the son of Homer Clark, a wealthy merchant of Fairdale.

The first lieutenant was Hal Martin. Officers and privates were youths of great spirit, and they were out to give their lives for the Union. They had been ordered West during the period of inactivity of the Army of the Potomac.

At Fort Donelson they had fought in valiant fashion. At present they were on a scouting expedition for General Grant.

The little gunboat Alert crept slowly along the river channel. On the forward deck stood Jack Clark and his young lieutenant, Hal Martin.

"If that Confederate battery is anywhere in this vicinity we ought soon to hear from it," said Jack. "I am sure they would hardly permit us to pass without firing upon us."

"That is right, Jack," said Hal. "Hello! Do you see anything suspicious on that point yonder where the fallen tree lies half in the current?"

Jack fixed his glass upon the spot.

He gave a start.

"Indeed," he exclaimed, "that does look suspicious! Those branches look as if they had been piled up there by man and not by the hand of nature. I say, Captain Wilson!"

The gunboat captain on the lower deck looked up and saluted.

"Train a gun on that point and let us see what a shell will do."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the commander of the gunboat. "It shall be done."

In a moment the gun crew sprang to quarters and the gun was trained. There was a sharp hiss and a boom, and the shell went tearing into the green verdure.

It burst with a terrific roar. A mass of debris rose in the air, and great piles of brush fell away, revealing the earthworks of a masked battery.

In an instant all was excitement, both on board the gunboat and in the battery.

A gun in the battery boomed and a solid shot struck the water in front of the gunboat. A shell burst overhead and a third shot took away the flagstaff.

Captain Wilson at once saw that it would be madness to advance recklessly to the attack and risk his boat. So he shouted to the pilot, who turned the course of the craft across the stream and up the other shore.

A slight bend hid the gunboat from aim, but shots were exchanged just the same, though at safer range. Now that the battery they were in quest of had been found it remained to capture or destroy it.

This was one object of the expedition. The battery had menaced all craft going up or down the river.

Two boats had already been sunk. It was General Grant's orders to remove this cause of disaster.

Jack Clark at once consulted with the captain of the gunboat.

"It is very clear that we cannot capture or reduce this place with our guns," he said. "They have heavy cannon and can blow the Alert out of the water."

"That seems true," agreed Jack. "There is, then, only one way. It must be attacked from the land side as well."

"Then you wish your men landed?"

"Yes! Put us ashore, if you can, just below here. Let the boat drop down the stream a quarter of a mile."

"All right, sir."

So the Alert dropped back with the current, and soon was out of range. Then, at a favorable point, she ran up to the bank and a plank was thrown out.

The Blues marched ashore and at once formed on the bank. Jack and his lieutenant, Hal Martin, took their leave of Captain Wilson.

"It is understood that you are to co-operate with us," said Jack. "We shall endeavor by a detour to come up in the rear of these fortifications and take them by a charge. You are expected to help us from this side."

"The Alert will do all possible," said Wilson. "When I hear your guns I will at once move up."

Jack now speedily got his men into a line of advance. Then they all set out.

Their point was to capture the battery by a quick dash from the rear. This had seemed feasible.

But, as the Blues advanced, Jack began to see that this was to be no easy task. The nature of the ground was the reason for this.

It was uneven and exceedingly boggy. There were places where it was almost impossible to advance.

And as the Blues progressed they met with a scattering fire, which picked off the men here and there with no prospect of a return of the compliments. Altogether the Blues soon found that they had their hands full.

But Jack Clark was not the one to turn back. He was out to capture the masked battery and he was bound to do it.

So the brave little company kept on. It was not long before they had got well out toward the point where the battery was.

Then matters grew warm.

The gunboat moved up and opened fire on the other side. The Blues sent volley after volley into the screen of trees where the battery was.

In reply, shells were sent into the bushes, and speedily the Blues found that their position would soon be untenable.

So Jack gave the word finally:

"Fix bayonets! Ready!"

The Blues knew well what was coming. The cold steel was the last resource.

And, as the brave Boys in Blue gripped their muskets and waited the word many a heart went back to scenes of home and friends, knowing that it might be possible that they would never see them again.

Jack Clark saw that it was a moment when it was necessary to use desperate means.

To fall back now would mean defeat. To go ahead was the only hope of victory. So Jack gave out the word:

"Forward all! Charge!"

With a cheer the brave Boys in Blue sprung forward. Straight into the jaws of seeming destruction they went.

The cannon belched forth smoke and flame. The muskets of the Confederate defenders sent out fierce volleys.

But, as the Blues went on, they were partly screened by the oak scrub, and between the volleys they, by order of their officers, fell flat on their faces.

So the bullets hissed over their heads, and few took effect.

When almost up to the battery Jack Clark sprung in advance. He leaped upon a felled tree and waved his sword.

A shot swept his cap away. Another struck the hilt of his sword, and two passed through his coat sleeve.

But he seemed to bear a charmed life.

"On, Blues!" he shouted. "One jump now and the enemy are ours."

With one wild, rousing cheer the brave company of youths responded.

Their gleaming bayonets, coming over the breastworks, filled the Confederates with terror. They fell back, became disorganized, and the victory was won.

The Blues went over the breastworks and drove the gunners back.

The rabble of Confederates could have been mown down like sheep with a raking volley. But Jack Clark was not the one to give such an order.

Human slaughter was a thing to be avoided. His ringing order went up:

"Hold your fire, they'll surrender!"

At this dozens of the defeated Confederates threw up their arms and cried:

"We give in, Yanks! We surrender!"

The battle was over. In a few minutes the captured Confederates were in line, disarmed and under guard.

The victory was a brilliant one.

The Blues had accomplished the first part of their mission. They had captured the masked battery, and could make report to General Grant of the same.

The Alert now ran up close to the shore, and Jack went down to confer with Captain Wilson, who was the most delighted of all.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNEXPECTED ATTACK.

The gunboat's captain shook hands warmly with Jack, and cried:

"By jingo! you did bravely! I didn't think you had men enough!"

"We avoided their volleys and kept going," replied Jack.

"It was grand! They have six guns; that was a big thing! Well, captain, I suppose you will return now?"

"By no means," said Jack.

"What! You are going further?"

"I am going to strike into the interior to get what information I can concerning Beauregard's plans. But I will turn the prisoners and the captured guns over to you, and you can return with them to Pittsburg Landing. I will give you a letter to deliver to General Grant."

"Very well, captain."

So Jack wrote a letter to General Grant, telling him what he had done and what he proposed doing.

Then the captured Confederates were filed aboard the Alert and the cannon were taken aboard. After which the steamer cast off and headed down the river.

The Blues were left behind in the captured battery. It was a daring plan they had projected.

To march boldly across the country, with the knowledge that the foe was upon every hand, was no light undertaking.

At any moment they might be captured or perhaps wiped out of existence by some larger force of the enemy.

But Jack had been entrusted with this scouting mission by General Grant, who had great faith in his ability, and the boy captain was anxious to sustain his chief's opinion.

They watched the Alert out of sight, feeling much like sailors might who were marooned in some distant part of the world.

But Jack addressed the Blues in ringing tones:

"Comrades!" he cried, "we are about to start upon a perilous undertaking. We are at this moment far from our own lines and in the heart of the enemy's country. At any moment we may run into disaster and defeat. But this we must avoid.

"It is known that the Confederates are in force at Corinth. We have occupied Pittsburg Landing with our army. The report is current that Beauregard and Johnston will come down to Shiloh and drive us back into the river.

"General Grant has given me orders to cut across the country from here, across Lick Creek, to the Corinth road. This is a region lying in front of the enemy. We are to capture every outpost possible, raid the country, and make it as difficult as possible for the foe to advance.

"Bridges must be destroyed, railroad tracks cut, and everything which would aid the enemy's advance must be destroyed. We are, at the same time, to gain all possible information concerning the position of the foe and other facts. All this we are commissioned to perform, and, retreating down the Corinth road, regain our own lines in due time.

"This is our object. We shall have forced marches by day and night, much fighting and danger. But we must not falter in our duty. We will go ahead with resolution to never turn back, and if we win we will have the grand consciousness of having done our duty. If we lose and die in battle we shall die as brave men should."

Cheers wild and earnest greeted the young captain's speech.

Not one in that devoted little company would have thought of turning back. Not one would show the white feather.

But the attack upon the battery had resulted in the loss

of several of the soldier boys besides the wounding of others.

It was necessary to bury the dead and administer to the wounded. So Jack decided not to go further for at least two or three hours.

The dead soldiers were buried with the honors of war, a file of soldiers firing a salute over their graves.

Then the injuries of the wounded were dressed. With the capture of the battery plenty of supplies were gained.

The Blues cooked a good evening meal, of which they were glad to partake.

By this time darkness had begun to settle down. There was a damp mist in the air, indicating rain.

An ordinary commander might have hesitated to make an advance in the face of this contingency.

But Jack Clark knew that procrastination was an evil trait in a commanding officer. Night and storm were obstacles not to be considered.

He was shrewd enough to foresee that all indications pointed to an approaching struggle with arms such as the country had not yet seen.

The concentration of the enemy's forces at Corinth, the gathering of the divisions of both armies could mean only that a conflict was approaching.

To be prepared was half the battle. If the Blues were to accomplish their daring dash from the Tennessee to the Corinth road they must do so before the Confederate columns should so far advance as to occupy the country.

So a night march was imperative. He was decided to start at once.

The evening meal was over, the wounded had been cared for. Scouts had been out to the westward and the course was seemingly clear, when a startling thing happened.

From the rear or inland of the fortification there came musket shots. A couple of the pickets came hastily in.

"We are attacked!" cried Lieutenant Martin, as he dashed into Jack's tent. "The enemy are in force in our rear!"

"The enemy!" exclaimed Jack. "Where the deuce did they come from?"

It was a most astonishing denouement. But it was necessary to at once meet this unexpected contingency.

At once the Blues manned the breastworks. The Confederates came on in the gloom, firing volleys as they did so.

The bullets swept the breastworks and the Blues kept low, only answering the fire at times.

"Wait till they charge," said Jack. "Keep your fire!"

This was the best of advice.

But it seemed for a time as if the foe would be content with holding the Blues in the fortification until daybreak.

This was a contingency which young Captain Clark did not relish.

It meant a possible defeat of all his plans. He must not lose time in useless conflict here.

Had there been any logical way of abandoning the earthworks he would have done so at once.

He regretted now that he had given up his guns to the

captain of the Alert. There certainly never was a time when he needed them more.

Jack even thought of a sally, but just when he was beginning to give way to despair, an exciting cry went up:

"Steady, boys! Here they come!"

This was seen to be true. Through the gloom came the foe, with bayonets bristling. It was a thrilling moment.

"Hold your fire!" called out Jack, steadily. "Wait till they get near!"

Then the word was given, and a terrible volley was poured into the oncoming ranks.

It swept the gray line back and covered the ground with dead. Once again a volley was poured in.

And this time the foe were repulsed. They fell back in wildest confusion. It ended the battle.

The attacking Confederates retired. What became of them Jack and his comrades never knew.

They certainly did not show up again. After a time the young captain of the Blues decided to evacuate the fort and start upon his march.

So the Blues fell in and slowly marched out along the water side of the battery.

They followed the bank of the river for a mile and then set their faces westward through the oak forests.

There was not one in the little band but was conscious of the great perils before them. But not one would have been willing to turn back.

For a long time they pushed on through the woods. At times they found the traveling difficult, the ground being soft and miry.

Until the night was well-nigh spent they plodded steadily on. Jack's guide was an old scout, known as Bill Jason, who was thoroughly familiar with the region.

After hours of exasperating and tiresome climbing over logs and through underbrush, Jack cried:

"I say, Jason, where are you taking us to? It looks as if you meant to do us up entirely."

The old scout chuckled, and said:

"All right, captain! I reckon ye'd better be here than two miles south of here."

"How is that?"

"Oh, thar's ther hull front line of Bragg's army. If ye was to hit on their advance guard ye'd be gobbled up like a piece of meat by a turkey buzzard."

"Indeed!" said Jack. "And is that why you have taken us through this forsaken wilderness?"

"Yas," replied Jason. "Ye kin feel safe hyer."

Jack said no more. He felt sure that the scout was wise in his plan.

But suddenly, as they floundered on, they came upon a cut in the swamp where trees had been felled in a wide swath.

These trees had been placed along with dirt piled over them, making a rough corduroy road.

The scout in the early morning light examined this piece of engineering work and whistled softly. Jack also noted an interesting fact.

"It looks to me," he said, "as if this road had just been constructed."

The scout nodded.

"You kin bet that's so, and the construction gang ain't far ahead of us."

"What does it mean?"

"It means much," replied Jason. "You see, Bragg is on the other side of this swamp. The Confederates would have to draw in the wing of their army to git around it. So they've sent their sappers and miners through here and made a road. You'll see the hull wing of the Confederate army coming down through here in a day or two."

"Do you think so?"

"I know it."

There was no reason to doubt the old scout's hypothesis. It also caused Jack a thrill, for he could see startling possibilities.

Here, on the start, was a chance to strike a telling blow at the enemy and hinder their advance. Anything that would delay them would mean much to the Union cause.

CHAPTER III.

ALONG THE CORDUROY ROAD.

Jack saw that there had been no travel over the corduroy road as yet. The dirt was fresh and untrodden, save by the construction gang.

It was all very plain to him.

Bragg was planning to advance with that wing of the Confederate army to strike the Union forces at Pittsburg Landing. He would gain hours of time by this direct route.

"Jason," he said, sharply, "where do you suppose that construction gang is at this moment?"

"I can't say," replied the scout. "Send a couple of runners north and you will find out."

Jack did this.

He picked a couple of the fleetest men in the ranks. These started away rapidly and were soon out of sight.

It was an hour before they returned.

"One hundred men, with horses and wagons, are working about three miles from here," they reported.

"All right," said Jack, grimly. "Now, boys, pull out those logs and pile them up and fire them. Did you cross a bridge anywhere?"

"About a hundred yards down the road around that bend."

"How long is it?"

"Two hundred feet. It is made of logs tied together and floating."

"A floating bridge! A dozen of you go down there and cut it away. We will then be protected from attack in that direction. If General Bragg gets his artillery over this road he will do well."

The Blues set to work with a will.

In the early morning light they proceeded to rip up the road, and piling up the logs set fire to them.

The floating bridge, which extended across a soft marsh and the waters of a creek, was cut away and allowed to drift down the stream.

Then Jack turned his attention in the other direction.

With a squad of his men he went up the road for a quarter of a mile. Here was another bridge built of logs and plank. This was ripped up, and thus the crossing of the stream by artillery or baggage trains at least was an impossibility.

By this time the sun was up, and the spring air wafted through the trees was most agreeable. The pattering rain of the night before had vanished.

The spirits of the Blues were high.

They were accomplishing good work, and it was bound to win them praise later on. They had not only captured a battery and many prisoners, but they were doing that which would retard Bragg's march and perhaps prevent his getting into the fight at a critical time.

As soon as the logs were fired and the bridges destroyed, the Blues were ready to continue their march on through the woods.

But at this juncture distant shots were heard, and a number of the advance guard came rushing in.

"I think they have seen the smoke of our fires, captain," said Hal Martin, as he pointed to the burning logs. Jack was ready to accept this theory.

"Well, that is doubtless so," he agreed. "We will change our line of march then and go down the other way."

"Down the corduroy road?"

"Yes."

"But—the floating bridge is gone!"

"We can manage to ford, I think, if I judge the depth of the stream aright. The bridges are only for the artillery."

So down the corduroy road at the double-quick rushed the Blues. They soon reached the abutment of the destroyed bridge.

As Jack had guessed, the depth of the stream was such as to permit of fording.

So the Blues plunged into the current. A section of the bridge was found also, which was improvised as a raft.

They were soon safely on the other side of the creek.

By this time the blazing logs had made a tremendous conflagration. The flames were mounting many yards high and roaring fiercely.

And through the smoke they saw uniforms of gray. The Confederate advance outposts had sent a force to investigate.

When they found that the corduroy road was destroyed, at least in this section, their rage and surprise must have been great. It was not suspected by the Confederates that such a thing as a Yankee detachment was anywhere in the vicinity.

Now, however, when they saw the blue uniforms on the other side of the creek their surprise and anger was great.

They gave a wild yell and began to form rapidly on the opposite bank of the creek.

Jason, the scout, who had just come in from the woods, said:

"I don't believe there are many of them, Captain Clark. If I was you I wouldn't run from them."

"No more we will," said Jack, promptly. "Lieutenant, deploy your men. Send out pickets in the rear. Open fire and let us see if they will attack us!"

This was instantly done.

Corporal Tom Peters, fat and genial, was only too glad to take charge of the picket guard, which set out down the corduroy road to make sure that no attack could be made from the rear.

Then the battle opened.

The Confederates tried hard to drive the Blues back from the opposite bank so that they could cross. But they kept up such a hot fire that this became an impossibility.

In a short while the fire of the Blues became so hot that it was the Confederates themselves who were compelled to fall back.

Jack could not pursue them, and as he knew nothing was to be gained by crossing again to pursue them, he gave orders to fall back from the creek.

So the Blues, once more victorious, fell back. They went on down the corduroy road rapidly, for Jack realized that it was well not to take too many chances of becoming surrounded.

He knew that he was far from communications and that their supplies were limited. On all sides were the foe.

The Blues had secured some rations at the captured battery. But those would soon be exhausted.

It would then become necessary to strike into the open country and do some foraging.

Ahead of them the boy captain knew he could not fail to run into the construction gang.

It was likely that this was protected by a heavy guard. So, as they went on, Jack was constrained to ask the advice of old Jason the scout.

The latter took a fresh chew of tobacco and squinted his eyes thoughtfully.

"Let me see," he said thoughtfully. "We are not far from Lick Creek now. Once we cross that we kin reach the open country. I know a planter over thar on a branch of ther creek named Joe Hornby. He's a Northern man, an' I believe he'd do all he could to git us some supplies."

"Well," said Jack, "can we accomplish anything by the way?"

Jason spat reflectively, and replied:

"Yas, I think ye kin. About three miles from thar is a Confedrit outpost. You kin take it, I believe, with your company."

"Is it on our way to the Corinth road?"

"Yas, it sartinly is!"

"Enough!" cried Jack. "We have done damage enough here. It will take them some time to repair it. We will go on to Mr. Hornby's place. We can decide what to do when we get there."

"Kerect!" cried old Jason. "Fall in, boys, I'll show ye the way!"

The order was given, and the Blues once more struck out through the woods. They became suddenly conscious of the fact that the foe had crossed the creek and were coming up in their rear.

For half a mile through the woods the Blues kept up a running fight with these pursuers.

Then the latter dropped back and soon had given up the chase.

It was a difficult march through the rough woods, and it was more than two hours later that the Blues burst out of the forest at last and came to the cleared country.

A stump-dotted field lay before them.

Beyond this were rail fences and climbing these they came to a little rise of ground.

From this they looked down upon the rambling buildings of a Tennessee farm or plantation. It was a thrifty looking farm also.

"Thar we are, captain!" cried Jason. "It's Joe Hornby's place, an' you bet he'll be mighty glad to see us!"

The Blues marched down a lane to the farm-house. As they approached a crowd of negroes gathered, eager with interest and curiosity to see the "Yankees."

"Hello, Cuffy!" cried Jason, addressing one of them. "Whar's your master?"

"Massa Hornby am gwine ober to Shiloh," replied the negro. "He be back soon. Mebbe yo' drap in an' wait?"

"I dunno," replied Jason. "Ther captain kin say how long we oughter wait."

"I fear not for long," said Jack. "But who has charge of the place when Mr. Hornby is away? Is there no overseer?"

"Oh, yes, sah! Dere am Massa Trumbull. He am comin' now!"

Across the yard stalked a tall figure with the air of one who is conscious of his authority. The overseer was apparently a man of forty years of age, with thickset frame and features of a heavy cast, a heavy jaw, deep set eyes and wide brow.

Eph Trumbull, which was the overseer's name, looked at the Blues in a sour and distinctly hostile way.

"What do ye want here, Yanks?" he demanded. "Ye're on private property!"

Jack looked at Jason, and then replied:

"We have come to see Mr. Hornby. Are you his overseer?"

"My name is Trumbull. Mr. Hornby is away. If you'll state yer business I'll attend to ye."

"Very good," said Jack, coolly. "We want to purchase supplies for our company. If you have any pigs or chickens for sale we will buy."

The overseer looked Jack up and down in an insolent way.

"Oh, ye want to buy, do ye?"

"I said so!"

"Wal, it's a wonder! Most of you Yanks will steal everything you get your hand onto."

"That is false, sir," replied Jack, with spirit. "We only forage when the people refuse to sell or manifest hostility. Reprisals of that sort are all in accordance with the established customs of war."

The overseer's eyes glittered.

"Is that so?" he sneered. "What are you Yankees doing down in this country, anyway? Why don't ye stay at home where ye belong?"

"It's the fault of such pig-heads as you that we are here," retorted Jack. "If it wasn't for just such chaps as you there would be no occasion for fighting!"

CHAPTER IV.

AT HORNBY'S PLANTATION.

It is hardly necessary to say that Eph Trumbull, the overseer, was angry and stung by Jack's reply.

He glared at the young captain fiercely.

"Hang me, but ye're a smart young clip, aren't ye?" he gritted. "Now, I order ye off this plantation. Ye've no business here. Git out!"

Jack smiled in a cold, steady way. He turned to Jason and said:

"I thought that we would get friendly treatment at this place, Jason?"

"We would if Joe Hornby was here," spluttered the scout. "I don't believe he gave orders to this jackanapes to treat visitors in any such way."

Trumbull took a step toward the scout.

"Do ye mean to insult me?" he gritted. "I'll break ye in two."

"No, I think not," said the scout, drily, as he walked right up to the angry overseer. "Get a civil tongue in yer head!"

Trumbull trembled with impotent rage.

"Ye kin bluff with all that armed gang at yer back," he said.

"It's not a gang at my back," retorted Jason. "They are a military company of gentlemen, and they are fighting for the Union. Understand that?"

The overseer snapped his fingers.

"The civil laws of the land don't permit ye to trespass on private property."

"Martial law sets civil law aside in all cases," said Jack. "Now, sir, you are gaining nothing by your conduct. I could order my men to raid your place if I chose, for you have given me sufficient provocation. But I will prove to you that we Yankees are not such a lawless class as you seem to think us. Attention, company! Right face!"

Jack was about to give the order to march, and would have left the farmyard then and there.

But a surprising thing happened.

From behind a clump of shrubbery at Jack's right there

stepped a slender female figure. A young girl of the Southern type, beautiful as a dream, stood before the boy captain.

He gave a violent start, and for a moment almost forgot where he was. He stared at the beautiful apparition almost rudely.

Then, with a sudden recollection, he doffed his cap.

"Pardon me, miss," he said. "Pardon this intrusion." Then to his company: "Right face! Forward! March!"

The Blues swung about as if on a pivot and would have marched away. But the young girl, with heightened color and flashing eyes, cried:

"Halt!"

Jack came to an instant stop. His action caused the whole company to halt. The young woman stepped forward, with an air like a queen.

"This man is not in authority here now," she said, in sharp, incisive tones. "He is my father's overseer, but he has no instructions to turn visitors harshly from this plantation, and thus give the lie to true Southern hospitality!"

Trumbull turned with hot face and sullen manner. He could not meet the gaze of the planter's daughter.

"It ain't required to show hospitality to our enemies," he said. "I am acting on principle! I am loyal to the Confederacy."

"So am I," replied the young woman. "But hospitality forbids our turning people from our gates, whether friend or foe, if they apply for aid!"

"But they're Yankees, Miss Lida! Can't ye see it? Oh, I see!" and the overseer's swarthy face darkened. "It's this handsome young captain that has caught yer eye. Wal, go it! I don't keer! Ye can be lookin' for a new man in my place! I ain't goin' to be disloyal to the cause!"

He glanced at Jack, and then turning on his heel strode away.

Lida Hornby, for she was the planter's daughter, crimsoned and bit her lip. Her head was raised half in haughtiness as she turned to Jack again.

"Now, sir, what is your errand here? This is my father's plantation. I am in authority here when he is away!"

Jack bowed courteously.

"He has a fit representative, I am sure," he said. "We are not here to cause you any trouble whatever. We are scouting for General Grant. We have fought our way from the banks of the Tennessee, and we are getting short of supplies. If you can sell us some we will be glad to buy!"

Lida Hornby was about to make a signal to one of the colored men, when Jason stepped forward.

The scout doffed his cap, and said:

"Excuse me, but I am Bill Jason. I am an old friend of yer father's. I held you on my knee when ye was a baby. If he was here thar's nothin' he would refuse me!"

The young girl smiled cordially.

"I don't remember you," she said, "but I have heard papa speak of Bill Jason. I am glad to serve you, sir, in any way you desire."

"Spoken like yer father's daughter. Now, sis, I'm actin' as guide for this 'ere company. They're all decent boys. I

want ye to treat 'em well. If your father was here, he would!"

"My father's friends are mine," said Lida Hornby, warmly. "I shall offer you the freedom of our place here. I can do no more."

"That's right, miss; but we won't take advantage of your offer. All we want is to buy some of your pigs and hens."

"We have plenty, and you shall have what you want," she said, readily. "There will be no charge for them."

"I cannot accept of your generosity," protested Jack. "I must pay you a fair price in Uncle Sam's gold."

"Oh, well, you may settle that with my father some time."

"I hope to see your father."

"It is time for him to return. Ah, there he is now!" A joyful cry escaped her lips, and she started forward.

Down the lane galloped a horseman. He partly drew rein at the sight of the Blues. But the next moment he was in the yard.

He stared at the Blues in amazement. Then, flinging the reins to a negro boy, he dismounted.

"Hoity-toity! What's all this?" he cried. "What have we here?"

The planter was a man of aristocratic appearance, tall and well-formed, with clear-cut, fine features. His hair was white, and his mustache as well.

Jack bowed, and said:

"I am Captain Jack Clark, of the U. S. service. I hope that I am not unwelcome here?"

"Unwelcome!" cried Joseph Hornby, in a hearty manner. "Everybody is welcome here who is not a personal foe! Come in and have dinner with us. I will send the slaves to cook for your company. Hello! What do I see?"

Jason advanced with outstretched hand. The planter rubbed his eyes.

"Don't ye know me?" asked the scout. "Don't ye know Jason?"

"Bill Jason!" exclaimed the astonished planter. "Well, that beats me! How did you ever come here?"

"I jined the service," said the scout. "I'm scouting for Grant. I see you are in with the Grays."

"Yes, that is my cause. If it wins I am made. If it loses I am a lame duck all my life."

"Why not be on the winning side?"

"I am on the winning side. Hang it, aren't we winning hands down? I know enough for that!"

"Don't ye believe it," said Jason. "The Union arms are ahead. They can't wipe out the Union. If some of our brothers get disaffected and drop out than are others to take their places. The war is going to be pushed through, you bet."

"It looks like it now," agreed Jack. "Certainly all indications point that way. But I want to catch time by the forelock on this march, so cannot tarry but a little longer. I wish you would make an inventory of such stuff as you can spare, put a price on it, and we will pay you in cash."

The planter's head went up, and he looked about him imperiously.

"Cuffy, you and your friends there go down to the smoke-house and take out all the hams you can find there. I think we will manage to subsist."

Jack was astounded.

"Eh?" he exclaimed. "You give us all your hams? I cannot accept them without pay."

The planter made a deprecatory gesture at this.

"Don't speak of it again. This is no time for pride or a false sense of honor. Bivouac your men! My slaves will furnish them food. They will be treated well, be sure!"

Jack was undecided what to do.

He knew that this was a good chance to feed and rest his men, whose rations had been none of the best. Yet he was afraid he might tarry too long.

But the planter had already dispatched his negroes for the hams. The Blues had begun to unbuckle their knapsacks.

"All right," agreed the young captain. "I accept your hospitality, Mr. Hornby, and shall await a chance to pay it back."

"Pshaw," said the planter. "Don't speak of it. We shall have dinner soon, as it is near noon. Now, captain, allow me to ask you a question."

"Ask all the questions you choose," said Jack. "I shall endeavor to answer them."

The planter laughed.

"I want to ask you if Grant is going to try and hold Pittsburg Landing?"

"Try and hold it?" repeated Jack. "Certainly he will! He is holding it now."

"Ah, yes! I have no doubt. But you must know that the whole army of Johnston and Beauregard are coming down to the Landing to crush him."

"He probably knows that."

"I doubt it."

"Why?"

"I believe that if he knew it he would be sending his troops across the river, instead of fighting with the river at his back—a most fatal thing to do."

Jack felt a sort of chill. He recognized the fact, and instinctively the horrors of Ball's Bluff came to him. The situation was very similar.

"General Grant is a very great general," he said. "He doubtless knows that he can hold his ground."

"No man can be sure of that. He may be driven back and into the river. He has no bridges and no boats. I tell you he is in bad shape!"

Jack looked at the planter keenly.

"Where did you hear that?" he asked.

"I heard it at Confederate headquarters. I have just come from there. It is intended to forever crush the Army of the Tennessee this time."

CHAPTER V.

THE PLANTER'S PREJUDICE.

This remarkable declaration of the planter interested Jack Clark greatly.

"You were at Confederate headquarters?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And you learned that they were going to make a concentrated attack upon Grant and drive him into the river?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Jack, with supreme confidence, "I don't believe General Grant would have stationed himself at the Landing if he wasn't sure he could hold it. You will see!"

"Your confidence in Grant is supreme!"

"He is a man whose actions speak louder than words."

"Well, I'll admit that. But don't forget that he is up against some of the greatest Confederate generals, and they will beat him."

"Don't you believe it!"

"Well, my decision is reached. Make of it what you can, I am sorry for Grant; but he will meet defeat, if not extermination at Pittsburg Landing!"

Jack had listened attentively to this estimate of the approaching affray, and he was bound to admit that the planter was largely right.

The advantage of position lay with the Confederates. They were momentarily drawing in their men. When the right moment should come they would descend like a thunderbolt, and therefore the Blues would be hurled back into the river.

It seemed to Jack as if he ought to convey the news of this plan to Grant.

But he saw that this was impossible. If Grant had his men posted right, and nobody knew better how to appoint outposts than General Grant, all might be well. A desperate defence would certainly be made.

But the planter laughed, and rejoined:

"However, let us drop that subject for this time. I am nominally a Confederate, though really I would prefer to be neutral. If it was known that I had told these things my home would be burned or torn down about my ears."

"Is it not bad for you to give us entertainment, then?" asked Jack. "I would not have you subject to such risk on our account."

"They can hardly make that claim or at least prove it," answered Hornby. "Every plantation is requisitioned at times for the welfare of troops of either side. So rest easy, Captain Clark. While your men are eating I hope you will honor us with your presence at dinner."

The planter had given his arm to his daughter Lida, who was regarding the handsome young captain shyly.

"I thank you, Mr. Hornby," he replied. "Your invitation is so cordial and sincere that I feel like accepting it."

"Of course you will. This invitation also includes you, Jason. You see, captain, your scout and myself were old school friends."

Jack left the Blues in charge of Hal Martin, and he and Jason accompanied the planter and his daughter to the house.

They sat on the porch and chatted while the dinner was being prepared.

Jack found that he had struck a hospitable mansion. The planter and his daughter did all in their power to

furnish pleasant entertainment in their simple, free-hearted way.

The planter told good stories, and Lida, by her father's request, sang a ballad so sweetly that it caused Jack Clark to catch his breath, and for a moment he felt queer about the heart.

It brought him a memory of one other fair maiden of the Southland, whom he had known at school.

She was the daughter of Colonel Jeff Prentiss, of Virginia, high in the councils of the Confederacy.

Nellie Prentiss, the sweetest and most charming girl Jack Clark had ever known, had been his promised sweetheart. Her brother, Will Prentiss, was his chum.

But the war had divided them as with an iron hand.

Nellie Prentiss had entered the service as a female spy. Her brother had organized a company known as the Virginia Grays.

Jack had heard but little of Nell Prentiss since that memorable day when he had donned a blue uniform to fight for the Union.

He had often felt the dreariness of the great void between them. He wondered if it would ever be bridged, or would she forget him and give her heart to another before peace should be declared?

So, as he regarded the sweet and winsome Lida Hornby, the planter's daughter, he realized also that the same gulf existed between them.

He was a guest in their house. Southern notions of hospitality tolerated him. Setting those aside he was their enemy. They were his foes. They were partisans of a hostile cause.

"You sing beautifully, Miss Hornby," he said. "Do you know this song?"

And Jack, with a rich tenor voice, sang a soft lilting love ballad. The cadence was rich and pure. It held his listeners enthralled.

Lida's eyes sparkled, and the color came and went in her face. It was plain that her respect and admiration for the young Union captain was aroused.

But Jack was careful not to encourage this. However, he soon saw that quite another sentiment animated his fair hostess. As he trilled the last stanza softly, she suddenly burst into tears and covering her face with her hands, went quickly into the house.

Jack paused instantly, his face the picture of wonderment and dismay.

The planter's face was dark, and he tapped the floor of the porch with his toe.

"Bless my soul!" he spluttered, then said no more.

"I fear I have distressed Miss Hornby," said Jack, rising. "I—I am sorry—"

"Hang the women, I say!" cried the planter, vigorously. "Hang the women, I say! No, no, captain, it is none of your doings. I—I would call her back, but—hang it! for her mother's sake I am easy with her. Yes, too easy!"

Jack was perplexed. He sat down again in his chair. It was all an inexplicable mystery to him.

He tried to appear unconcerned. The planter essayed a general conversation, but there was an air of constraint.

Just then the colored servant announced dinner. They went in, and as they sat at the table Lida appeared as cheerful and winsome as ever.

Indeed, she appeared more than ever vivacious. Every subject of gay nature was blithely discussed by her.

The dinner was superb. Indeed, it was a treat to the boy captain, who had been content to live on hardtack and water for days at a time when rations were low.

After dinner they repaired to the drawing-room. Here Jack was shown many works of art and curios from distant lands. The home of the Hornbys was one of refinement and taste.

But, as Jack was looking about the room, he noted a small miniature on a table. He gave a start.

It was the face of a youth, dressed in the gray uniform of a Confederate captain. His face was clear cut and handsome, showing high character.

The planter's face darkened.

"Lida!" he said, sharply, "why do you keep that picture here? Don't you know that it goes against my wishes?"

The young girl, without a word, took the miniature and at once left the room. For some moments there was a constrained silence.

Jack Clark was too well bred to affect to notice the incident. But Hornby, glancing at Jason in an agitated way, said:

"Gentlemen, I feel that I ought to explain my daughter's conduct. That picture she just took from the table is the likeness of a neighbor's son. The next plantation to mine was owned by Watson Clayborn. Ten years ago Watson Clayborn and I had serious trouble over a boundary line. In a fit of anger he drew a pistol and shot me down. The bullet is yet in my side."

"We were foes thereafter. Neighbors by constraint, but never again friends. Two years ago Watson Clayborn died. He left the estate to his son Clyde."

"Now, to show the irony of fate, I will tell you that my daughter madly loves this son of my old friend, but later implacable foe, Watson Clayborn. I would rather see her in her grave than married to Clyde Clayborn, for I have sworn hatred upon the tribe, root and branch."

"I have forbidden her meeting him. I know that I am breaking her heart, and it is indeed hard. But—I can't go back on my vow. She shall never marry him!"

The planter's face was white and set. It was plain that he meant what he said.

"I don't think ye're doin' right," said Jason, flatly. "Ther young chap ain't to blame fer what his father did."

"No, but the same blood runs in his veins. I can't bear to think of my child marrying the son of my deadliest foe."

Jack made no comment. His sympathy was deeply with the young girl. But he knew the inflexible character of the planter too well.

"Pardon me," he said, quietly. "But can you tell me where this young man is now?"

"Yes, he is captain of a company in a Missouri regiment

in Bragg's army. He is in the division that is on the move to crush Grant at Pittsburg Landing."

Jack drew a deep breath.

"Ah, I see!" he said. "Is there any blemish upon his character?"

"Not in the least," replied Hornby. "I have no other objection to him. If he were not a Clayborn I would be proud to accept him as a son-in-law."

"Can't you overrule this prejudice?" asked Jack. "Consider, as Jason says, that the boy is not to blame for the crime of his father."

"I can't overlook it," said the planter, coldly. "It is utterly impossible."

The subject was dropped.

Jack and the scout sat out on the piazza for a time, chatting with the planter. Finally Jack arose.

"Mr. Hornby," he said, warmly, "I wish to thank you for your generous entertainment. Commend us kindly to your daughter. I hope to return the kindness some day."

"When the war is over," said Hornby, with a ring of sadness in his voice.

"It should never have been."

They gripped hands and parted. Jack and Jason walked back to the bivouac. Orders were at once given for the Blues to fall into line.

A few moments later they were marching away to the west. They had proceeded some distance down the rough pathway which served as a road, when Jack remembered a thrilling fact.

He had left a valuable plan and map on the porch of the planter's house. It was of great value to him.

There was no way but to return for it. So Jack halted the Blues. In wonderment Hal Martin came forward.

CHAPTER VI.

JACK ACCEPTS A NEW MISSION.

"What's the matter, Jack?" asked the young lieutenant. Jack quickly explained.

"I'll send Corporal Peters back!"

"No," said Jack, quietly, "I'll go myself. Remain here till I return."

The boy captain went hastily back. In a short while he had reached the porch and sprung upon it.

There was the paper all safe. He placed it in his pocket and took his leave. Nobody was visible.

But as Jack passed through the grounds he heard voices. One of them was high-pitched and rough.

"I tell ye that ye'll allus be sorry! I'm a comin' man. I'll have money enough soon to make a queen of ye. Now, say ther word. Is it ter be or not ter be?"

A faint, feminine voice was heard.

"No, I cannot promise you. I cannot marry you, for I don't love you!"

"You will love me," was the hissing reply. There was a scuffle and a shriek.

This was enough for Jack. He sprang to the scene in an instant. Bursting through the shrubs what he beheld dazed him.

Writhing in the embrace of the burly overseer, Eph Trumbull, was the slender, almost helpless figure of Lida Hornby. A scream for help had pealed from her white lips.

With one bound Jack had reached the two. One blow of his fist drove the ruffian to the ground.

He scrambled to his feet. But Jack faced him with a drawn pistol.

"You hound!" he cried. "Unhand that woman or die! If you dare insult her again I will kill you as I would a snake!"

"You—I'll even it with you," hissed Trumbull. "What right have you to interfere? I'll have you—It's fixed already and I'll be the one to stretch your neck!"

The curious words of the overseer might have given Jack a surprise, but Lida had crept to his side and caught his arm.

"I beg you to protect me from that villain," she cried, in trembling tones. "He has dared to persecute me with his proposals of marriage for some time past. I told papa, but he will believe nothing against his overseer."

"Well, if he dares to persecute you again, I'll hang him to the first tree," cried Jack, hotly. "What do you mean, you scoundrel? Has not this young woman refused your proposals?"

"She is a fool," gritted Trumbull. "She don't know when she is well off. I'm a man with a future and I kin give her a home. She is in love with that young milksop of a Clayborn. But her father will never permit her to marry him."

"My father is not to be the arbiter of my future," cried Lida. "I don't think he is right in permitting his prejudice to ruin my life."

"Nor I!" cried Jack. "He is certainly wrong, Miss Hornby. Without a word against your father as a gentleman and a man of honor, yet I must say that in this matter he is wrong!"

"I thank you for agreeing with me," said the young girl, gratefully. "You are the first to tell me that. Everybody else says I should defer to my father's wish."

"By no means," said Jack, earnestly. "Obey your father's wishes in everything else. But your life's happiness is sacred and you are right in seeking it, even against his wishes."

"Ye're a fool!" cried Eph Trumbull, angrily. "That's pooty advice to give a young gal. If her father don't know what's good for her, nobody else does."

"My father is prejudiced," said Lida, plainly. "He is determined I shall not marry Clyde Clayborn. My life has become so unhappy here that I can stay here no longer. I shall leave this very day."

"What? Leave here!" exclaimed the overseer, with a lightning gleam in his eyes. "Do ye know what ye're sayin'? Leave yer father's house an' his care!"

"My duty is elsewhere," said Lida, in a decided manner. "My country is fighting to maintain its rights. I would be indeed disloyal to her if I did not give her all the aid in my power. I am going to do so!"

"Oh, ye're goin' into the ranks, I suppose?" jeered Trumbull.

"No!" replied Lida, coldly. "I am going to take up one of the grandest and holiest of missions. I am going to become a nurse in the hospital service. I shall devote my life to assuaging the pains and suffering of the wounded and the sick."

Trumbull's face was contracted with rage and chagrin. He glared at Jack and then at the young girl.

"I'll bet ye that ye don't do it," he said, significantly. "I know what I'm talkin' about, you'll see."

He snapped his fingers and turning strode away. Jack and Lida Hornby stood facing each other.

"It seems that I came just in time," said Jack. "I am happy to have been of service."

"I shall not forget the service," she said, earnestly. "I have a deep respect for you, Captain Clark. I know that you know my secret. I feel that I have your kindly interest and sympathy."

"You have," declared Jack, sincerely. "I am eager to help you all in my power."

"Do you mean that?"

"I do."

She drew a small package from the bosom of her dress. She hesitated a moment, and then with calm tones, almost prophetic in their import, said:

"Two great armies are soon to meet in battle. There will be terrible shedding of blood and loss of life. One side or the other must lose. If the Union wins you will see many dead and dying on the field or in the prisoners' line. If the Confederacy wins you will still see the same. I feel that somewhere you will meet Clyde Clayborn. If you do, give him this. It will explain itself to him. If he—" she paused, "if you do not find him in life—if he is a sacrifice upon the field of battle, you may destroy the package. That is all."

Jack took the package with a low bow.

"I will perform the mission for you just as far as I am able," he said. "I will make a special effort to find Mr. Clayborn—for your sake."

"I thank you, Captain Clark! I shall never forget you!"

Her eyes met his, and the young captain saw in them a light which thrilled him. In that moment he would have gone through fire and water for this pretty lovelorn maid.

A few moments later he was on his way back to his company. The Blues were awaiting his arrival and were once more under way on the long march.

At their head Jack joined the scout, and they walked on rapidly.

The young captain had learned enough to satisfy him that it was now necessary to reach the Corinth road and complete his mission as soon as possible.

He would be able to get back to the Union lines at Pitts-

burg Landing none too soon. The storm of battle must break before many days.

For some hours the little company marched on.

The march was not wholly confined to the highway. There were times when the Blues cut across the plantations and traversed patches of forest.

But they kept up the same untiring swing, until finally, as the day began to wane, Hal Martin said:

"Captain, our boys are getting played out. I think we had better wait somewhere and rest a while."

"Very well," agreed Jack, "let a halt be called on the hillside yonder. I think I can see a spring of good water. It will be a good spot to bivouac."

Thus far, since leaving the Hornby plantation, they had seen no sign of the enemy.

It seemed odd enough that the region should be so free of roving bands of Confederates. Corporal Peters had an explanation for this.

"I reckon they are concentrating for that attack on the Landing," he said. "You will see plenty of them there."

"That is logical!" agreed Jack. "Well, it is lucky for us. We have gained the primary point of our expedition. I am anxious now to get back to our lines."

"Is there no nearer route than by the Corinth road?" asked Hal.

"Yes, the Hamburg road is nearer. But we will have to turn back to get that, and it is hardly feasible."

By this time they had reached the spot selected for a bivouac.

The Blues threw off their knapsacks and stacked their muskets. They made a quick search for firewood.

In a little while fires were blazing and they were engaged in cooking a meal, for all were hungry, as well as tired.

Jack never made a halt without putting out a strong line of picket guards. He had no desire to be surprised.

The sun was getting below the horizon. The air was chilly and felt a bit damp. Jack walked about the little encampment, and then, acting upon impulse, climbed some high ground nearby.

From this eminence he could get a good view of the country. Far ahead in the west he saw thin columns of smoke at very regular intervals along the horizon.

He knew their meaning. A large force of men were there encamped.

They might be Union soldiers, but it was more likely that they were Confederates. Jack studied the situation closely.

He knew they must proceed in that direction to strike the Corinth road. He was by no means sure that this was not already in the possession of the Confederates.

In that case the Blues would be simply marching into a trap. Jack Clark had no desire to do this.

For some while he paced the eminence and watched the distant campfires. He was thus engaged when he heard a footstep in his rear.

Jack turned, and for one instant it seemed to him as if he must collapse with surprise and dismay.

Before him stood a dozen armed men. He was covered

by as many muskets. He saw that these men wore the uniform of the Confederates.

A tall, young officer, whose face was partly obscured by the wide rim of his hat, said:

"Pardon me, captain. A single outcry or an attempt to escape will be fatal. You are a prisoner!"

Jack was not foolhardy.

It was a hard thing to accept, that he was captured thus in sight of his own camp by a handful of the foe.

But it was easy for him to see that resistance meant death. There was no doubt that the young Confederate officer meant every word he said.

"You have me," he said, quietly. "I see that there is no escape."

"There is absolutely no chance," said the young Confederate officer. "So long as you offer no resistance no harm will be done you, and you shall be treated as a prisoner of war."

Jack suffered his sword to be taken from him. Then he fell into line and marched away with his captors.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE ENEMY'S HANDS.

It was certainly a most discouraging reflection to Jack Clark that he was captured within easy call of his comrades.

Once the impulse was upon him to make a bold dash for liberty.

But the folly of this was too plain. He would be shot down with the utmost ease. Life was too dear.

His captors marched rapidly away down the other side of the eminence and struck into the woods. Here they took a sort of path or trail, with which they seemed to be familiar.

For some while they followed this.

Darkness now rapidly shut down. It was impossible for Jack to tell where he was going.

But all things have an end. In due time the officer in charge gave a sharp command, and a halt was made.

Then he went forward some yards, and Jack heard the hail:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"Friends!"

"Advance, friends, and give the countersign!"

"For love of Dixie!"

"For love of Dixie! Pass this way, friends. Shall I call out the guard?"

"No," was the reply. "It is only a scouting party of a dozen. We have a prisoner, whom we must take to Colonel Melrose at once."

The guard lowered his gun, and now, at a whistle from the officer, Jack's captors marched him past the picket.

A few moments later the glare of campfires burst through the darkness. Jack saw the usual scene of a military camp.

Before him stood a dozen armed men. He was covered

He saw that it was not that of a company merely, but of a regiment. It gave him a chill.

He knew that he could not have traveled more than two miles through the forest. If a regiment of Confederates was thus so near the camp of the Blues, their position must indeed be one of great danger.

What was to prevent a surprise attack? Jack felt the cold sweat upon his brow.

He was marched into the midst of the Confederate camp and halted before the entrance of a large marquee tent. A guard here said, in answer to the officer in charge of the prisoner:

"Colonel Melrose will receive you in one moment."

It was but a short while therefore before Jack and his captor, the tall young officer, entered the tent. The file waited outside.

Colonel Melrose, of the Mississippi Tigers, was a man of middle age, stout and rather pompous. He looked up at Jack over his spectacles as he entered.

"Hello, what is this?" he said, languidly. "The fellow is a captain, eh? Where did you get him?"

The young officer in charge of Jack now removed his hat. But his back was turned to Jack so that at the moment his face could not be seen by the prisoner.

"Yes, Colonel Melrose! I think we have made an important capture!"

"Why? Is he a spy?"

"Oh, no! He is the captain of that company of cunning Yankees who cut the corduroy road below here and gave Packard's men such a beating."

Melrose sprang up. He stared at Jack a moment, and then softly whistled.

"Oh, I see!" he said. "This is Captain Jack Clark of the Fairdale Blues."

"You have guessed rightly," said Jack, with a bow. "In what manner can I serve you, colonel?"

"Egad! You are a cool one, my youthful Yankee! I guess you don't realize where you are?"

"I think I do! I am a prisoner in the camp of a Confederate regiment."

"Is not that bad enough?"

"I feel assured of honorable treatment."

"Do you? If I mistake not you are a raider. You know well the fate that befalls such."

"I demand the courtesy accorded an officer of my rank and standing."

"You will get it," said Melrose, coolly. "Now, Clayborn, tell me all about it. Where and how did you get him?"

Jack's captor turned, and now the young captain, for the first time, had a full view of his face. He gave a start and a violent ejaculation. The name spoken by Melrose had attracted his attention first. But his face had settled all doubt.

It was the same as he had seen in the miniature at the home of the Hornbys, and which Lida Hornby had told him was the likeness of her lover.

The same handsome, clear cut, manly face. He felt

giddy for a moment, and it was hard for him to believe that he was not dreaming.

That Clyde Clayborn, whom he had promised to find, should be his captor seemed strange indeed. For a moment he stared at him in a manner so marked that both Clayborn and Melrose exchanged glances of surprise.

"He seems to know you, Clayborn," said the colonel. "Have you met him before?"

"Never," replied the young Southerner. "He is a complete stranger to me."

"No," said Jack, quietly. "Captain Clayborn does not know me. But I know much about him, and one he holds dear."

Blank astonishment showed in the young captain's face. He stared at Jack. Then he said:

"You speak in riddles, sir! From whom did you obtain knowledge of me?"

"I have lately made a short stay at a plantation owned by Joseph Hornby!"

"Lida!" gasped Clayborn. Then his face grew very pale. He took a step nearer.

"I know," he said. "You met her. She told you of me. Tell me, is it well with them at the plantation?"

"No!"

Jack spoke sharply and decidedly. The young Confederate officer gave a little start. He looked keenly at Jack.

"In what way?" he asked. "Tell me all, I beg of you."

"Well, Lida needs you. There is a bad influence at work there. A certain dark scoundrel known as Trumbull is the overseer there."

"Yes, yes!" gritted Clayborn, excitedly. "Out with it, man! Tell me all! Is he playing a deep game?"

"I think he is. You should pay a visit there at once."

"I have thought of that. I had hoped we would get nearer on this expedition. But fate has been against me!"

"You must overcome fate. I will now take advantage of the occasion to give you this."

Jack handed him the little package. It was taken by Clayborn, who turned aside a moment to open it.

For some moments the young captain was thus engaged. It was some while before he came back to himself.

All this while Melrose had waited with much impatience.

"Come, Clayborn," he said, finally, "I hope you will realize that the business before us is of more importance than the reading of love messages!"

Clayborn put the package in his pocket, and turning saluted his superior.

"You are right," he declared. "I must humbly beg pardon. I am now at your service."

"Well, tell me about this business. Where is his company?"

"Not over three miles away, encamped in a hollow. If a descent was made upon them under cover of darkness I have no doubt they could be surprised and easily taken!"

"Good!" cried Melrose, excitedly. "Are the roads good?"

"Very good. Then I will advise you to make the attempt to capture them at once. As soon as they discover the ab-

sence of their captain you may be sure they will be on their guard."

"Bah!" exclaimed Melrose. "They number barely a hundred. I have a thousand men to send after them."

"That may be. But they have with them the most wily fox on the line to-day, the scout and spy, Bill Jason. He will pull them out of any scrape."

This very fact had been in a large measure a consolation to Jack. He had unbounded confidence in the sagacity and shrewdness of old Jason.

"Captain Clark," said Melrose, coolly, "I offer you a chance for the sake of humanity. Bring your company down here and surrender them, or I will be compelled to attack them and perhaps wipe them out entirely."

"Colonel Melrose," replied Jack, "I have no intention of surrendering my company to you. For the time they are deprived of my leadership. But you will find that there are others fully as capable to lead them."

"That is enough!" cried Melrose, promptly. "Call out your companies, Clayborn. Go down there and surround them at once. If you can't handle them I'll send you reinforcements."

"All right, colonel! I would beg a word with the prisoner."

"Wait till you come back," snapped Melrose. "Guard, take the prisoner away! See that he is guarded well!"

Clayborn bit his lip and shot a glance at Jack. But he saluted and went out without another word.

Jack was taken in charge by the guard and led from the tent. He was placed in another and surrounded by guards.

Escape was something which did not suggest itself to Jack Clark. He sat down and buried his face in his hands.

In that moment he saw the demolition of all his plans. Utter ruin and defeat stared him in the face.

Himself a prisoner, his company surprised and cut to pieces. What would General Grant think of this?

It seemed to Jack as if he could not stand it.

He arose and paced up and down the tent. He looked out and counted the chances of a mad dash past the guard.

But he saw that such a thing would be madness.

All he could do was to remain quiet and trust to some happy stroke of fortune. Would it come?

He could hear the companies turning out to go on the night expedition against the Blues.

It seemed as if he must send them some warning. There must be some way to avert this awful catastrophe.

Thus chafing and worrying, his brain seemed ready to turn. But there was no help for it.

He sat down finally and gave himself up to dull despair.

It was long after midnight when he heard the clatter of hoofs. A horseman dashed into the camp.

Jack could hear Colonel Melrose turn out to receive a message. He could hear every word of it repeated:

"To Colonel Melrose, Mississippi Tigers:—

"March your regiment five miles down the Corinth road on receipt of this. Be-ready for an assault upon the enemy's works in the morning.

BRAGG."

The orderly rode away. The drums beat the long roll, and the Confederate soldiers came tumbling out of their blankets.

In a very short space of time the six companies left of the regiment were on the march for the Corinth road.

CHAPTER VIII.

FREE ONCE MORE.

It is hardly necessary to say that this was all a mighty revelation to Jack Clark.

He had been striking for the Corinth road himself with the Blues. Altogether it was an unexpected development. Many things puzzled him.

If the Corinth road was in the possession of the Confederates, then the Union forces had changed their base. This he discovered later to be true, Sherman's division having fallen back to Shiloh Church.

Another fact mystified the young captain. If the four companies sent out by Melrose to surprise the Blues had accomplished their mission they should be heard from.

Not a sound of distant firing had reached Jack's expectant ears.

It gave him a thrill of hope.

He reflected that his disappearance must have been discovered. Perhaps the astute old scout, Jason, had fathomed it and knew that Jack was a prisoner.

If so, the boy captain knew that the Blues would be on their guard. Their first move would be to attempt his rescue.

He knew, of course, that this would be impossible in the face of such odds. But at least they might baffle any attempt to annihilate or capture them.

If the Confederates were to make an attack on Pittsburg Landing in the morning it was to all seeming impossible for the young captain of the Blues to be on hand to report to General Grant and lead his company into the battle.

This, as much as anything else, filled him with dismay and chagrin.

But Melrose was now marching in hot haste across the country to the Corinth road.

He had sent messengers to recall Clayborn and his men. This meant that unless the Blues had been attacked they were safe.

Jack now clung to a wild hope.

Perhaps in the course of the excitement attending the battle he would get a chance to escape. He did not relish the thought of a long term in a Confederate prison.

For some while Melrose marched across the country, until finally they uprooted a rail fence and burst into a highway.

It was the road which led from Pittsburg Landing to Corinth. It had been trod and galloped over by infantry and cavalry of both armies at different times.

As soon as the regiment was in the highway Melrose called a halt. The reason for this was soon apparent.

Two horsemen came riding hotly up the highway. They flung themselves from their horses and saluted the colonel.

One was the messenger sent by Melrose. The other was Captain Clayborn.

"I am here in response to your call, Colonel Melrose," said Clayborn. "We scoured the country for some trace of the Fairdale Blues, but they have given us the slip in some way."

"That is most unfortunate, Captain Clayborn," said Melrose, sternly. "Where is your company at this moment?"

"They are a half hour's march in the rear, sir."

Melrose bit his lip. It was plain that he was vexed.

"Very well," he said, "we will wait for them to come up."

"Colonel Melrose!"

"Well, sir?"

"Is it true that we are ordered to advance to the attack upon the Landing in the morning?"

"It is, sir."

A shade of disappointment crossed the young captain's face. Jack Clark in the gloom could not see his face, but he guessed readily from his tone that he had half hoped for a chance to pay a brief visit to Hornby plantation.

In due time the other companies came up and then the full regiment marched on.

Jack, in the midst of a file of men, was plodding along, when suddenly one of his guards dropped back.

Another took his place. The boy captain gave a start as, in spite of the gloom, he recognized Clayborn.

"I want to talk with you," said the young Confederate captain, in an agitated tone. "I could see no other way, as our colonel seems so cranky."

"I am pleased to talk with you," said Jack.

"Thank you! I feel that you have done me a great favor. The message you brought me was very important."

"I am glad that I was able to deliver it to you."

"But the price is the loss of your personal liberty, for which I feel sorry."

"It was the misfortune which may befall any one," said Jack.

"That is true! I can see that you are a brave and noble fellow, even if you are a Yankee. I know that you stand high in her estimation, and that is enough for me."

"I think she is a very high-minded and charming young woman."

"So do I! Moreover she is my promised wife, in spite of what her father says. Shall I tell you that she is already on her way to the Shiloh Field Hospital to accept service as a nurse?"

"She acquainted me with her intention before I left the plantation."

"Indeed! It is a matter of some concern to me, as I dread the strain she may incur mentally and physically. Lida is very sympathetic. She is too apt to seek to carry others' burdens. As for the overseer—I have learned important facts concerning him!"

"Oh," exclaimed Jack, "is that so?"

"He is a spy and a traitor! He has been receiving money for giving away secrets concerning the movements of our army. Doubtless he expected to win the hand of Lida Hornby by a vulgar display of his ill-gotten gains. I fear his treachery now more than aught else."

Jack heard this with surprise. But he understood now the significance of the overseer's words when he threatened him.

"I believe he is a dangerous fellow," he said. "And Mr. Hornby does wrong in trusting him."

"He will turn upon him like a snake," said Captain Clayborn. "And therein I much fear him. He will, no doubt, pursue Lida, and there is no telling what he may do."

It was plain that the young Confederate captain was deeply worried. Jack felt for him deeply.

"You see," continued Clayborn, "at the present moment I am utterly helpless. I can do nothing to prevent harm coming to Lida."

"To-morrow morning my company goes into the attack on the enemy at the Landing. I may not leave the field alive. But if I do, I promise you I shall see that Eph Trumbull is dealt with as a spy and traitor should be."

"In any event," said Jack, "I wish you and your fiancee much happiness. I trust the dark clouds will clear away from your lives and give you much joy."

"I thank you, Captain Clark," said Clayborn, with deep feeling. "I regret that I was compelled to make a prisoner of you, but I promise you that you shall have fair treatment."

With this Clayborn dropped back and the guard took his place. They were now well down the Corinth road.

The orders from Bragg had been for Colonel Melrose to march straight down the Corinth road until he should be able to join a division of the regular army and then move on for the morning attack.

But, as in many another case, the general's plans had miscarried. The sacrifice of a regiment is little considered in the building of great plans by a military commander.

For some reason the Confederate division did not rest its line on the Corinth road.

So, as Colonel Melrose's regiment marched on in the dark, looking for the picket of their own army, they ran into a trap.

Suddenly, from the gloom, came a stern hail:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"Friends," replied Melrose. "We are the Mississippi Tigers, and we are ordered to join you in the attack on Pittsburg Landing in the morning."

There was an instant of silence, then a mocking laugh came out of the gloom:

"Oh, you are, eh? We are glad to know that. We are Sherman's advance guard, and you are ordered to surrender or we'll blow you off the earth!"

It was like a stroke of lightning from a clear sky.

But Colonel Melrose, dazed as he was with the astounding revelation, was not the man to yield without a struggle.

"Fall back, men!" he shouted. "Deploy in line of battle! Stand your ground, boys, for the sake of the Confederacy!"

Cheers burst from the lips of all in the gray ranks.

But the next moment the ground shook with the thunder of guns. Shot and shell cut into the close ranks of the regiment and mowed them down in heaps.

Down came a charging line of blue.

It was madness for the Confederate regiment to try and stand. They broke, were riddled, and fled.

Prisoners were taken by the hundred. Among these was Jack Clark.

It is hardly necessary to say that the boy captain of the Blues was deeply thrilled by the denouement. At one stroke his liberty was regained.

If he could only rejoin his company his hopes of getting into the battle on the following day would be realized.

Jack was huddled with the rest of the prisoners and then marched into the Union redoubt.

But he was recognized by the major in charge of the defenses and at once released. To him Jack told his story, to which he listened with interest.

"I will furnish you a horse, and you may report to General Grant at once, if you wish," he said. "No doubt you can give him important information."

Jack saw that this was the necessary thing for him to do.

He might have started out at once to find his company. But this was by no means of such importance.

So he accepted the major's offer, and mounting the horse at once started for General Grant's headquarters at the Landing. It was a quick ride, and Jack flung himself from the saddle at the tent of the commanding general.

He was at once ushered into his presence, for even at that hour of the night General Grant was receiving and sending dispatches.

In a moment Jack stood in the presence of the great commander. Grant bit off the end of his cigar and threw it away.

"I have been looking for you, Clark," he said. "What have you to report?"

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREAT BATTLE.

"I think I have much of importance," replied Jack. "In the first place we assaulted and captured the masked battery up the river."

"I heard about that. Go on."

We then left the Alert and set out across the country for the Corinth road. We crossed Lick Creek. At the plantation of a man named Hornby we learned that an attack would be made upon our forces as soon as the Confederates could be concentrated. It is their purpose to drive you into the river."

"Yes," said Grant, slowly, as he lit another cigar, "I see how that could be. They think my position a weak one."

"Yes, with the river at your back."

"Just so! What next?"

"We had engagements prior to reaching the plantation. We destroyed Bragg's artillery road through the swamp."

"Capital! That will delay him!"

"So we hoped. We struck out after leaving Hornby's for the Corinth road. But I found that it had changed hands, or at least that part of it—"

"Sherman's line drew back last night."

"Yes, sir. It placed us right in the enemy's midst. While reconnoitering I was captured by Colonel Melrose of the Mississippi Tigers. I was held a prisoner. I learned while in his hands by an order he received that a general attack is to be made early in the morning."

Grant was cool and undisturbed. He puffed quietly at his cigar.

"The order received by Melrose was to at once proceed down the Corinth road and join a division of the Confederate army there. But he ran into a Union battery and his regiment was dispersed. I was able to escape, and here I am."

"Clever work, my boy," said General Grant. "Where is your company?"

"I do not know. I beg leave now to search for them."

"You have that leave, sir, and in going I want to tell you that I esteem your services in this enterprise as of the highest. I shall not forget you."

"I am pleased if I have done my duty, sir," said Jack.

"You have, and most effectually."

Jack withdrew from the general's tent. He had the full consciousness of having rendered a great service.

But just outside the tent an orderly appeared and saluted:

"Captain Jack Clark?"

"Yes," replied Jack.

"A dispatch for you, sir!"

With surprise Jack took it and read:

"To Captain Jack Clark:—

"Your company of Fairdale Blues is here safe and sound and delighted to learn of your safety."

"Signed:

WOODRUFF,

"Major Iowa Volunteers."

Jack could have danced for very joy. He at once mounted his horse and set out at full speed for the outpost.

When he galloped once more through Sherman's camp and into the battery commanded by Major Woodruff he was in high spirits.

The major himself greeted him.

"Your boys are bivouacked over yonder," he declared. "They have been very happy since hearing from you."

Jack made his way to the camp of the Blues. A moment and he was receiving a tremendous ovation.

"Well, you can bet we are relieved," cried Hal Martin. "We feared it was the last of you."

"Then you missed me at once?"

"Indeed we did!"

"I knew thar was suthin' wrong in a minit," declared Bill Jason. "As soon as I could git the lay of the land I

made the boys git out of that spot as quick as they could, and it happened durned lucky, too!"

"That's right!" cried Jack. "Melrose had force enough to swamp us!"

"Well, he didn't catch us! We tried to git some clew to you, but we couldn't. We hev been dodgin' Confederate regiments ever since. The country is alive with 'em out thar."

"Yes! They are coming in to concentrate in a grand attack on the Landing."

"They'll git all they want," said Jason, with a knowing shake of the head. "Now you listen to me. Grant knows what he is doing. They'll git a surprise."

"I hope so," said Jack, "but I wish that river wasn't back of us."

"Bah! Every man in this army knows what that means. It means no retreat. It's fight or die. That is what ther Union army is goin' to do."

There was plenty of logic in old Jason's reasoning, as all were willing to admit.

But as there was yet an hour or two before dawn, the Blues decided to get what sleep they could. The following day would be one of battle and hardship.

Jack lay down in his blanket on the ground. He slept the sleep of the exhausted until a hand on his brow awoke him.

He looked up into the face of Bill Jason the scout.

It was broad daylight. Jack started up instantly and began to buckle on his sword.

Then he was surprised to see the Blues all in line and waiting. Hal Martin was at their head.

"We let ye sleep as long as we could," said Jason, explanatively. "Then the order came for ye to move out on ther line. The attack may come any time."

"It is unusual for me to sleep that way," said Jack, with a sense of shame. But the old scout laughed.

"Ye were a tired boy," he said. "Thet was a hard pull last night. We're all lucky to be here. I wouldn't keer to go through it again."

"That's right enough," agreed Jack. "But now I'll make up for past faults. Fall in, boys!"

The Blues marched out and joined the advance guard. Already the popping fire of the skirmishers could be heard in the distance.

It was Sunday morning, April 6th, 1862, that the great battle of Shiloh was fought. A more desperate or bloody encounter could not well be imagined.

It proved to the South what had been strongly doubted, and this was that the North would fight.

Hardee's corps first crossed Lick Creek early on that Sabbath morning. They soon reached the outposts of Grant's army.

These were driven in with a wild yell and a rush.

The charging regiments came down through the oaks and the sulphury smoke. Shells burst in the air and bullets glanced from the trees.

At this hour General Grant was far away at Savannah,

where he was to meet General Buell. But the latter did not appear.

He heard the first guns, and waiting for no more set out rapidly for the scene. He took a steamboat for Pittsburg Landing. At Crump's Landing he ordered General Lew Wallace to follow immediately with his division.

When Grant reached the field it was eight o'clock.

He saw at once that he had to fight the combined forces of the Confederates, and that without the aid of Buell.

His force aggregated 38,000 men, that of Beauregard was about 41,000; so that the two forces were very near equal.

Sherman and Prentiss formed the advance guard of the Union army. The Confederate generals, Bragg and Hardee, fell upon Sherman's corps and forced them back upon Prentiss.

General Prentiss was an able and brave general. But his men were all raw recruits, having but eleven days' organization. Therefore it was not strange that they should give ground and yield to confusion.

Before nine o'clock Prentiss had been forced back and his camp captured and plundered. The Confederates wedged themselves between his corps and that of Sherman.

This famous general, who regarded his position as simply that of holding the enemy at bay long enough to enable the main army to prepare for battle, hung to his ground stubbornly in face of vastly overpowering numbers.

To stand in the thinned Union ranks and see the solid lines of gray come charging fiercely down through the oak forest with din and roar of cannon and musketry required the steadiest of nerves and the bravest of hearts.

But this the brave Boys in Blue did, as history records. They held desperately, while the Confederates began to slowly turn Sherman's left.

Then that mighty strategist swung his right about as on a pivot and presented a new front, which, for a time, the foe hammered in vain.

In the meantime McCleernand came to Sherman's aid, and between three and four o'clock in the afternoon they slowly and in good order retired to a better position on Snake Creek.

It was expected every moment that General Lew Wallace would appear on the scene with his fresh troops.

On came the Confederates in great irresistible waves. They hurled themselves against the Gibraltar-like front of the Union forces.

So fierce was the battle that thousands of the raw troops were unable to stand it. They broke and fled, and the road to the Landing was jammed with fugitives.

It looked at this hour as if the battle was hopelessly lost.

The Confederates, elated by their success, came on more fiercely than ever.

It seemed as if they were certain to carry out their promise to drive Grant and his army into the river.

It was at this hour that the famous Confederate leader, General Johnston, was killed. This was a great blow to them, and it was some time before General Beauregard could take the command.

This delay, as much as anything else, perhaps, saved the Union army from utter annihilation.

There was a limit to human endurance, and this was nearly reached when the battle lulled with the death of Johnston.

It gave Grant time to withdraw across the ravine by the landing. The view from here obliquely to the waters of the Tennessee was very beautiful. But it was soon to become a scene of horror and death.

All the guns that could be found were planted at the brow of this ravine, some fifty cannon in all.

The supply of gunners was short, but finally made up. The Confederates, anxious to capture the Landing before dark, came rushing to the attack.

Down into the ravine they rushed. The cannon poured shot and shell upon them. They were hurled back, shattered, torn and beaten.

The great battle of Shiloh was over with the coming of night. General Grant held his ground and was the victor of Pittsburg Landing.

CHAPTER X.

WINNING THE FIELD.

Through all the battle the Fairdale Blues were achieving brave deeds. Jack Clark and his brave boys were in the thickest of the fight when General Sherman's left was forced back.

Again and again they stood up in the line and fired volleys, which repulsed the Confederate charging columns.

It is not possible for tongue or pen to enumerate or describe the deeds of bravery done that day.

Once, in the thickest of the fight, Jack saw a regiment coming through the fatal ravine. He saw the commanding figure of Colonel Melrose leading his men on.

He fancied he saw Clyde Clayborn with his company, a part of the same regiment. Bravely they came up the ravine. A fine spectacle they made.

It was needless sacrifice of life. No human power could overcome the odds of that fearful ascent.

The air was full of flame and smoke and the roar of the guns. When Jack looked again he saw but a scattered remnant of that regiment. It was fleeing to the rear.

He knew, with a sickening sense of horror, that Melrose, and doubtless Clayborn himself, lay at the bottom of that ravine in the cold embrace of death.

He thought of young Clayborn and his life of promise. Of his love and of the fair girl who loved him.

Jack gritted his teeth.

"It is all wrong," he said. "There should be no war."

Night fell on the scene of horror with a pattering rain. The Union gunboats had maintained an incessant cannonade, and this was kept up throughout the night.

That night Buell's forces arrived; added to them came

Crittenden, McCook and Nelson. This gave Grant the advantage of numbers.

That night the Blues slept on the damp ground. The next morning they were ordered into line once more.

General Grant now changed front. From the defensive he took the offensive, and the Union forces now moved to the attack.

Buell's troops now went to the front. There was an artillery duel for over two hours, when the Union line moved forward on the charge.

It was then that the Blues were given a chance to distinguish themselves in a most thrilling manner.

They were at the moment far on the right of Grant's attacking line, which was under McCook. Suddenly, from the woods, came an enfilading fire.

A company of Confederates had come around and secured the position which was behind a rail fence and in the cover of the woods.

General McCook rode up and cried:

"Colonel, I wish you'd send a detachment over there to clean those infernal scoundrels out of there. They are enfilading our line."

The colonel turned, and his gaze rested on Jack Clark.

"That is a chance for you and your Blues," he declared. "Go in and wipe them out."

Jack waited no second bidding.

"Attention, Blues!" he cried. "Right face! Forward! Double-quick, charge!"

All in an instant, with a wild, ringing cheer, the Fairdale Blues started across the bullet-swept plain. They ran like deer.

They reached the rail fence, but were swept back by a sudden volley. Jack held them steady and they fell upon their faces.

Volleyes were exchanged without much damage to the Blues. Once again they sprang up and rushed forward.

In another moment the Blues had reached the rail fence. Jack Clark was the first to leap over, and shouted:

"At them, Blues!"

The boys responded with a wild cheer.

They went over the fence like agile monkeys. It was but a few yards to the woods now.

Cold steel had a terrifying aspect to the Confederates. They did not care to stand and meet it.

So, firing a scattering volley, they broke and fled. The Blues pursued them, capturing a number of prisoners.

When they returned after this daring bit of work, General McCook rode up and cried:

"Well done, boys! The regulars couldn't beat that. You shall have honorable mention for that."

The Blues cheered, and were ready for another charge. But the Confederates were falling back rapidly.

Beauregard in vain tried to rally his men. The Union fire was something terrific and their advance was steady and overwhelming.

Sullenly and stubbornly the Confederates retired, contesting every inch of the ground.

The camps lost by the Union forces the day before were

all recovered. The foe, infantry, artillery and all, were driven back.

It was a tremendous Union victory. For the Blues it was their greatest battle. Nothing they had participated in so far could approach it for magnitude.

The boys were glad that night to bivouac on the slope by the Landing, after a return from the firing line.

A cold, drizzling rain had begun to fall. It was an awful night for the wounded and straggling soldiers of either army.

Thousands had been wounded in that awful battle who were unable to find medical care or attention until the next day.

This was productive of terrible mortality. The sudden turn in the weather also added to the death list.

Jack Clark now remembered the terrible blow given the regiment of Colonel Melrose the day before. The ravine had been piled with corpses.

He seized the opportunity to pay a visit to the spot. The dead had been buried in unknown graves. The wounded had been removed to the field hospitals.

Jack was persistent, and soon found a grave, which had over it a small slab of wood, on which was carved:

"Colonel Melrose, Mississippi Tigers."

The plucky Confederate colonel had given his life in that awful battle. To Jack it looked as if he had thrown it away.

Jack knew that young Clayborn must have been in that charge.

If he had been killed he was in an unknown grave. If he was alive and wounded he was in some of the field hospitals.

As the boy captain had time to spare he was determined to ascertain this beyond all doubt.

So he left the ravine and set out for the hospitals. He entered one of the tents and passed between the long lines of the wounded and the dying.

Each nurse was asked for some news of Clyde Clayborn. But it was not until he had gone into many wards that he was given a great start of surprise.

A young nurse, pallid, but strangely beautiful, stood before him.

"You?" he gasped. "Lida Hornby, you are here?"

"Yes," she said. "I am with the Confederate service, but they would not deny me admission here."

"Why should they deny an angel of mercy?"

"To the true nurse there is no distinction between blue and gray," she said. "One is as fully entitled to care as the other."

"That is as it should be."

Her manner changed. She was half eager, half fearful:

"Oh, Captain Clark, can you give me news of—him?"

"News of Clyde Clayborn?" said Jack. "I regret that I can give you nothing definite."

"Ah! Then you know—you have seen him?"

"Yes, I saw him—I think I saw him when his regiment went into battle. I have not seen him since."

She gave a husky cry.

"Oh, don't keep me in suspense! Tell me! Do you know that he is—dead?"

"Oh, no," replied Jack, quickly. "I know nothing of the sort. It is quite possible that he is alive. But his colonel was killed and his regiment was horribly cut to pieces—"

A groan escaped her. She leaned, faint and pallid, against a pole of the tent.

"He is dead!" she whispered. "Oh, there is no more in life for me!"

"I don't think we can say that," said Jack. "It is possible that he may be wounded. But he is not dead, I am sure."

"You give me great hope."

"I believe what I tell you."

"Then—if he is wounded, he may be in some other ward. I cannot leave, I am a nurse now, you know, and—"

"I will look through the wards for you," said Jack. "Have no fear! I shall find him all right!"

The boy captain took his leave of the young nurse. He at once proceeded to keep up his quest for the missing young Confederate.

From one ward to another he went, from one tent to another, and inquired of all the doctors.

And, by the greatest of good luck, he was rewarded with success. He came to a white cot, upon which tossed a fever-stricken youth.

It required but a moment for Jack to recognize him. He bent down and gazed into the inflamed eyes of the sufferer.

"Captain Clayborn," he said, softly, "you know me?"

In an instant the youth gave a little, gasping cry and caught Jack's arm.

"Oh, it is you!" he said. "You escaped, and I was glad. But—our boys won the field—it is our victory?"

"No," replied Jack. "They were victorious the first day. But yesterday they were driven back."

"Driven back?"

"Yes! Grant had reinforcements. General Beauregard could hold the field no longer."

For some moments the young Confederate soldier was silent. Then he finally looked up and said:

"I have been treated kindly here. You Yanks are not half bad. I—I wish the war was over!"

Tears wet his cheeks, for pain had weakened his nerves. Jack smiled and said:

"The war will soon be over, the old feuds forgotten and we shall all be brothers again."

Clayborn's face grew wan and anxious.

"But—I cannot rest thinking of her," he said. "I have an awful fear that Trumbull will get her in his power."

"Have no fear," said Jack. "She is quite safe."

"Ah! You have seen her?"

"Yes."

"Tell me—where is she?"

He clutched Jack's arm feverishly, eagerly.

"I may not live," he said. "I feel death near me. I want to see her once more before I die!"

CHAPTER XI.

IN PURSUIT OF THE FOE.

Jack placed his hand tenderly on the youth's fevered brow.

"You shall see her," he said.

"Oh, God bless you!" cried the young soldier, joyfully. "I shall never forget you, Captain Clark. You are brave and noble."

Jack left the sufferer's side. He stopped to confer with the surgeon of the ward. The medical man shook his head gravely.

"The bullet is in his chest. We have not probed it yet," he said. "I much doubt his ability to rally."

"Then there can be no harm in the bringing of his sweetheart here?"

"None whatever," replied the surgeon. "It is a case which depends largely upon the spirits."

Jack hastened away.

He searched long for the young woman. He found Lida just receiving the dying request of a soldier.

He waited until she had performed the last sad kindness for the poor fellow. She laid the still head back upon the pillow and closed the vacant eyes.

She looked up and saw Jack.

"Just a moment," she said, softly. "He asked me to say a prayer over him."

She knelt, and with her face in her hands made silent prayer. Jack stood by with bowed and reverent head.

Presently Lida arose. She gazed at the dead soldier's face.

"Poor fellow!" she said. "An aged mother waits in vain for his return. These I am to send to her."

She held a small locket, in which was the image of a sweet-faced woman of mature age. There was a bundle of letters and money, all that would be left for a faithful, waiting heart save the memory of the day when he marched away with his handsome uniform and his air of courage.

Then Lida turned and looked at Jack in a penetrating way, and said:

"I am free for a time. Have you any news?"

Jack nodded silently.

Her face grew ghastly white, and she tottered nearer.

"Don't be afraid to tell me—he lives?"

"Yes."

"Is—there hope?" she asked.

"There is hope," he replied. "But I would do wrong if I did not tell you that it is but slight. The bullet is yet in his chest. The surgeons will soon probe for it. Perhaps you can exchange positions with the nurse in that ward. It will help the patient greatly."

She clutched his arm.

"God reward you," she said. "You have done much for us both. We shall not forget you."

They went at once to the ward where Clayborn lay. It was an easy matter to exchange positions with the nurse who had care of him.

Then Lida stepped softly beside his cot, and she knelt beside it.

A smothered cry of joy escaped him, and there was a long embrace. Jack and the surgeons, who were waiting, left them alone for a brief time.

Presently, though, Lida reappeared, and, with white face and a manner of deathly calm, said:

"We are ready! Come now!"

The surgeons entered, as did Jack. The chief surgeon was a genial man, and as he bent over Clayborn, remarked:

"You are a fine fellow, sir, too fine to lose. We shall have to pull you through for the sake of this charming young woman."

Clayborn smiled sadly.

"Were it not for her I would ask to die, after our defeat of yesterday," he said.

"Oh, pshaw! Your cause is not yet lost entirely. And even if it was, you'll find life won't be so very onerous under Uncle Sam. Cheer up, boy! Where is the wound? In the back, eh?"

Clayborn's face flushed.

"No, sir!" he replied.

"Oh, pardon me!" said the surgeon. "That is only one of my jokes. Defeated men usually are shot in the back, you know. But that probably is the reason you were shot, because you did not know when you were defeated."

The surgeon's quips and his brusque, genial manner were all calculated to key up the youth's spirits. In another moment he was examining the wound.

"Not at all difficult," he said. "It will be easily fixed. Just breathe a little of this, my boy. There! Pleasant dreams and all will be soon right again."

With perfect composure of mind therefore Clayborn went under the influence of the anæsthetic. In a short while the surgeons began their work.

The pulse flitted between life and death, as the skilled hands of the surgeons located the ball, close to a vital point. It was extracted, and the deadly hemorrhage finally subdued.

When Clayborn returned to consciousness he looked up into the face of the girl he loved.

But he knew her not. The fever upon his brain was to last for many weary weeks.

But over him there hovered a true heart, an angel of mercy, who would bring him back to life and happiness if it was within human power to do so.

But the field hospital was a bad place for one so delicately reared as Clyde Clayborn. An hour later, when Lida, white and calm, met Jack outside the ward, he asked:

"He is resting?"

"Yes, the drug holds him yet."

"If you keep the fever under control, I think he will be saved."

"That is my aim. But it is so hard to procure what I want here. Supplies are running short. I don't know what I shall do. Oh, if I only had him at home!"

"At home!" echoed Jack. "That is the idea! And it is not so very far from here, either. But your father——"

"My father is a humane man. He would not turn a wounded and sick enemy from his door."

"I will go down and carry the news to him at once," said Jack.

"Will you? I will forever bless you."

Jack left the hospital. It was now after ten o'clock. He had just reached the camp of the Blues when Jason the scout met him.

"Captain Clark," he cried, "here is an order from General Grant."

The orderly rode up and handed Jack a message. As he read it his face changed:

"My Dear Clark:—I am going to send Sherman in pursuit of the Confederates. I have an idea they can be driven back to their intrenchments at Corinth. It will please me if you and your company will scout in advance of his column. You may apply at the stables for horses. Use this order for what you need and start at once. Report to me later. Signed: U. S. GRANT."

Jack quickly turned to Jason.

"Jason," he said, "take this order to the stables as quick as you can. Have one hundred horses saddled and ready. I have orders to mount my company and scout in advance of Sherman's column."

The scout saluted.

"Your orders shall be obeyed," he said.

Then Jack turned to Hal Martin.

"Lieutenant," he said, "call the Blues into line at once. Discard all knapsacks and prepare for riding."

To the orderly Jack said:

"Report to General Grant that the Fairdale Blues are already under way to comply with his instructions."

At once the Blues turned out hastily at the roll of the drum. The prospect of new work was exciting to them.

Jack left orders with Lieutenant Martin. In a short while the horses came up on the gallop and the Blues began to mount.

Then Jack counted off a detail, which he intrusted to Corporal Peters. To them his instructions were as follows:

"Apply at the Field Hospital for nurse 54, ward 8, Miss Hornby. Tell her you are detailed to wait upon her. She will tell you what to do. You are to take a wounded Confederate soldier on his cot bed, tenderly by hand, and march to Hornby plantation. There you will take your leave and rejoin this company at the earliest moment."

Corporal Peters departed on his errand. Jack now sprang into saddle at the head of his men and dashed away.

The Blues were soon out upon the road to Corinth.

The scene they beheld was an enlivening one. General

Sherman's whole division was moving out to give pursuit to the Confederates.

The scene along the road was one which baffles description.

The retreat of Beauregard's army had been attended with much confusion. The roads were strewn with discarded military effects, overturned wagons, dead horses, corpses of soldiers, and many wounded were yet to be found.

The Blues galloped past all this scene of inextricable confusion on their way to the front.

For miles they kept on, but saw no sign of the foe. However, after a while, far on a distant hillside, Jack saw the guidon of a squad of cavalry.

"There they are!" shouted Hal Martin. "Get after them, boys."

Far beyond was seen another flag. Jack drew rein and said:

"It's no use to go over there, boys."

"Why?" asked Hal.

"That is their hospital! We don't want to capture that!"

"No; but to the right of it are long lines of men! See! It is cavalry!"

This was seen to be the truth.

What was more, the Confederate horsemen were deploying along the descent as if to make an attack.

Scout Jason placed a field glass to his eyes and studied the situation for a time. Then he cried, excitedly:

"It is Forrest's cavalry! Look out for that wily rascal, boys! He's the worst in the business! Keep yer eyes peeled!"

In all the long list of illustrious Confederate leaders the name of Forrest shines forth conspicuously as a master of strategy and daring dash.

The best tacticians of the world have given Forrest credit for greater generalship in the sphere he occupied than any other man of his time.

He was a thorn in the flesh to Grant and Sherman.

All efforts to capture him were vain, for his mobility was beyond comprehension. To-day he was in one spot raiding a supply train, two days later he was fifty miles away cutting a line of communications somewhere else.

So Jack Clark knew that he was pitting his small company against mighty odds.

Forrest doubtless had a force of cavalry numbering thousands. The Blues could not hope to give him combat.

But they could develop a skirmish and perhaps hold their own until Sherman should come up.

And this Jack proceeded to do. He deployed his men quickly and in an excellent position. At once fire was opened.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER THE GUERRILLAS.

Forrest's attack upon Sherman at the White House Hospital is recorded in history as having met with repulse.

But those who participated in the affair witnessed as hot a fight as one could wish to see.

The Blues were driven slowly back as Forrest advanced.

Of course they could not hope to hold out against such a superior force. But for a time they held him in check.

The advance guard of Sherman's column reached the spot soon after. Then the battle opened in real earnest.

In vain Forrest hurled his force against the solid ranks of Sherman's infantry. The Union fire proved too much and he was beaten back.

Sherman held his ground and captured many prisoners.

But, after marching some distance further, he saw that the Confederates had retreated to Corinth, where they were safe for the time.

Sherman began to fall back slowly now. But the Blues were sent out to hunt down and hang the guerrillas which, as offshoots of Forrest's cavalry, were making the country waste.

This was an arduous and exciting enterprise which pleased Jack Clark well. His men were all good riders.

They struck out from the Corinth road and rode east. The plantations which a few days before had borne so smiling and peaceful an aspect were now in many places but scenes of devastation and destruction.

The guerrilla bands swarmed the country. Wherever they struck little was left. They spared neither side, Union or Confederate. They were simply marauders and land pirates and murderers.

Short shrift was given some of them, either with rope or shooting at twenty paces.

Jack's orders were imperative, and he could not disobey them. But in some cases prisoners were made.

As the Blues rode on thus they encountered but little opposition at first. The guerrillas were never willing to put up a serious fight against the regular volunteers of the army. They invariably took to their heels.

But as the Blues got deeper into the region and nearer the Tennessee the marauders became more numerous and consequently more aggressive. Hot bush fights became the result.

Thus matters were when the Blues ran into a little cross-roads village, known as Four Forks. The place held but a handful of people, and these were up in arms, fearing an attack from some lawless gang.

The Blues were welcomed warmly by the inhabitants. The leading spirits of the town went out to meet them and assured young Captain Clark that they would be glad to have him remain there with his soldiers until the war was over, or longer, if necessary.

Jack assured them that he would protect them so far as

was in his power to do so. But he could not linger in the place.

At the fork of the roads was a brick and wood structure known as the Tavern. Here a genial boniface held sway and dispensed good corn whiskey and hoe-cakes to his patrons.

As Jack rode up to the Tavern he saw two men of rough appearance slink in at a side door. He chatted with the tavern keeper, whose name was Tom Lord, for some moments.

The boniface was especially urgent in his solicitations for Jack and his Blues to remain.

"I tell ye they've marked this town," he declared. "They mean to clean us out. We've got it straight that they are coming for us in a few hours at furthest."

"Is that so?" said Jack, quietly. "It looks to me as if you had some characters right here in town you have as much right to fear as you do the guerrillas."

The landlord's face showed fear.

"What do ye mean, captain?"

"Why, I just saw a couple of fellows slink into your bar-room who I would swear would take a premium as barn-burners and thieves anywhere."

The boniface gave a start.

"Oh, they are two discharged Confederate soldiers," he said. "They're not in service just now."

"Is that so?" said Jack, suspiciously. "Corporal Jackson, just take a couple of men and bring those fellows out. I want to take a look at them."

The corporal started to execute his bidding. But just then the clatter of hoofs was heard, and down the road behind the Tavern rode the two suspicious characters in full flight.

Jack called out to his men.

"After them, boys! Bring them back dead or alive!"

A dozen of the Blues, headed by Hal Martin, set out in pursuit of the fugitives. They rode like mad for over a mile, when the road diverged into a swamp, and here the two fugitives gave the Blues the slip.

An hour later Hal returned from his futile chase.

He found that Jack was waiting on the Tavern platform. As Hal rode up, he shouted:

"Well, did you capture them?"

"No," replied the young lieutenant, "they were too sharp for us. They completely fooled us."

"The deuce! I would like to have captured them. I have an idea they would be of value to us."

"Let me tell you something surprising," said Hal. "I recognized one of them."

"You did?"

"Yes."

Jack was interested.

"Well, who was he?"

"He is no other than Eph Trumbull, the overseer at Hornby's plantation."

For a moment Jack and Hal looked at each other steadily. Here was a revelation for both of them.

If it really was Trumbull, why had he decamped in such haste? Why should he show such fear of the Blues? Had he done something which he knew would merit punishment at their hands?

Jack drew a slow breath.

"Trumbull!" he said, reflectively. "What is he doing here? Why did he fear us? I say, Hal, I'm sorry we didn't get him."

Bill Jason the scout came riding up. He saluted and said:

"Pardon me, captain, but I reckon I hev heerd some news."

"What is it?" asked Jack.

"It concerns that ornery critter who was overseer down at Hornby's. You know who I mean?"

"Trumbull?"

"Yas."

"Well, what about him?"

"I've jest larned that he's turned guerrilla, an' that he has more'n five hundred men under his command."

Jack gave an exclamation of surprise. It was all comprehensive to him.

"I see!" he said. "I understand it all now. The scoundrel did not dare to meet us. I wonder if——"

Jack paused. A thrilling thought came to him. Had he as yet been down to Hornby plantation? If not, there was no doubt he would go.

He thought of the people down there.

Of Joseph Hornby, the honorable old planter, of Lida, and of the wounded young Clayborn.

Should Trumbull, in his vengeful state of mind, descend upon the plantation, the result would be tragical in the extreme. There was little doubt but that he would raze the place and sign the death warrant of the inmates.

This was enough for Jack Clark.

He sprang up and cried:

"Every man to the saddle! We have got work before us."

"Where are we going now?" asked Hal.

"I don't know. Anywhere to get track of this infernal monster. I'll not rest till Eph Trumbull swings from a tree. To Hornby plantation first. We must guard that place until he is caught."

The Blues hastened to mount. Tom Lord, the tavern keeper, came tremblingly to Jack's stirrup.

"I beg ye not to leave us without a guard," he besought. "If that's Trumbull, the guerrilla, he'll certainly come back here and burn us out."

"There are others beside you in the world, Lord," said Jack, coldly. "However, I'll leave a small guard here. If you are attacked send a messenger to Hornby's."

The landlord had begun to murmur his thanks, and Jack was about to give the order to ride away, when an unexpected thing happened.

The distant report of muskets smote upon the air. There was a clatter of hoofs and wild shouts.

Then into the village there dashed three wild riders bending over their horses' necks.

Behind them were horsemen in gray. The next moment the three fugitives had pulled rein before Jack and his Blues.

The first, a fat, genial youth, caught his breath with difficulty, and gasped:

"Here we are, captain, what's left of us!"

"Corporal Peters!" exclaimed Jack, in amazement. "Where did you come from?"

"From Hornby's, sir, where you sent us with the sick man and the young woman."

"Just so!" exclaimed Jack. "How did you track us here?"

"By inquiry, sir. But back here a mile we were set upon by a gang of those guerrillas, and they chased us all the way here. Two of our boys are dead back there on the road."

Jack reined his horse nearer.

"You left them all right at Hornby's?"

"Yes, captain."

"Did the planter object to taking young Clayborn into his house?"

"Oh, no, sir! He received them kindly. The young officer stood the journey well, and the girl seemed happy."

"That is all right. Fall in, Corporal Peters. We have work to do."

But before Jack could give the order to march the tavern keeper rushed out again and cried:

"Oh, captain, you will do well to stand your ground here. The enemy are coming. You will do no better than to make my house your fortress. Its walls are lined with brick and are bullet-proof. It was an old garrison house in Indian days. Give me a musket and I'll help you."

Jack saw that this was not bad advice. He hesitated but a moment.

The house was, as the tavern keeper said, an old garri-

son. The heavy doors swung back, allowing the horses to be ridden into an inner court.

This insured the safety of the animals. The Blues left them there and rushed to the windows of the Tavern.

The streets of the town were seen to be filled with the guerrillas.

They were as desperate and bloodthirsty a gang as any there had ever seen. Jack took his position at a window with a musket also.

The guerrillas were firing at the house, though their bullets could not penetrate the walls.

The Blues at once answered the fire.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIGHT AT THE TAVERN.

In less time than it takes to tell it a hot fight was in progress about the old Tavern.

The Blues fired volleys from the windows, which were shattered pane and sash. In this they were assisted by Tavern Keeper Lord, who found some old loop-holes under the eaves, where the early settlers had been wont to fire at the Indians.

A hot fight it was.

The advantage at first lay with the Blues. They were firing from cover, and the ground was soon strewn with the bodies of the guerrillas.

The latter could only trust to chance shots at the windows.

Once they tried to rush the house. They even got as near as the big doors. But they were driven back with most frightful loss.

Now, after an hour of desperate fighting, there came a lull.

The guerrillas drew back, and presently two of them were seen advancing with a white flag.

"See what they want, Hal," said Jack, as he busied himself binding up a slight flesh wound in his arm. "If they offer to surrender, tell them it must be unconditional."

Hal laughed merrily.

"I fear they will hesitate to accept such generous terms," he said. "However, I'll broach the matter."

Hal went down to the lower story and stepped out through an open window. He was not a little surprised to see that one of the truce-bearers was Eph Trumbull himself.

"Hello, Yank!" said Trumbull. "I came down to see if ye had enough."

"Enough of what?" asked Hal.

"Enough of our hot lead and powder. What do ye suppose?"

"Yes, we've had enough of that," said Hal. "I think you have had more than enough of ours."

"Well, then, ye're ready to surrender?"

"We hadn't thought of it."

"Well, what do ye think of it?"

"It don't strike me favorably."

"Are you in command?"

"No, I represent our captain."

"Oh, ho! I see! He was afeard to come out himself, was he?"

"I doubt it! If you will wait here he will probably come out and deal with you personally. Do you desire it?"

"I kin talk with you," said the villain. "Now, if ye don't surrender we're going to blow ye into the air with forty barrels of gunpowder."

"Indeed! That is a cheerful prospect."

"It's no time for foolin'."

"I'm quite interested to know how you are going to do that," said Hal. "You haven't tunneled the tavern already, have you?"

"No; but we've got a plan to beat that all hollow."

"Ah, you have, eh?"

"Yas, we have."

"Will you tell me what it is? If it shows us that there is absolutely no hope we might be induced to surrender."

"Wal, look up yonder on the hill."

Hal did so. On the hill, which sloped down in a smooth descent to the tavern, he saw a long four-wheeled drag or wagon of the Conestoga pattern.

On this were a number of kegs. They might contain gunpowder.

"Do ye see?" said the guerrilla chief, confidently. "Every durned keg is filled with powder. We purpose to hitch a rope onto that wagon an' let her slide down ther hill till she bumps into the house. Thar's a time-fuse in one of the kegs. It will explode soon arter the wagon strikes the building. Then thar won't be a grease spot left of you and your crowd. Ye kin see the hull thing now."

For a moment Hal felt a chill of horror. He saw the complete feasibility of this horrible scheme.

The explosion of the gunpowder would doubtless shatter and level the old house. The flames and the falling timbers would kill many of the Blues, and the bullets of the foe the rest.

For a moment Hal's face paled. He thought of tempor-

izing a moment with Trumbull, but just then Jack stepped out.

He had heard all.

"Ah, Trumbull," he said, "that is a very clever game you propose."

"Wall," chuckled the ex-overseer, "you'll find that it's the quickest pass to heaven you kin be given."

"Indeed! Now have you considered the fact that while you are rolling that powder down the hill we shall not be sucking our thumbs and waiting for it to come?"

"What will ye do?"

"We can make a sally for one thing."

"Come out an' fight in ther open? That's jest what we want. We'll wipe ye out in less than ten minutes."

"Don't be too sure."

"Wal, I give ye one last chance. Come out an' lay down yer arms or be blown to smithereens. What do ye choose?"

"We will stay in the tavern."

"That's yer decision?"

"Yes!"

"All right! We'll show ye something."

The desperado and his guard turned and walked away. Jack and Hal went back into the tavern.

"By Jingo, old man," said Hal, dubiously, "it looks bad for us if he does what he says he will. He can certainly blow us all to pieces."

"Wait and see," said Jack, coolly. "The game won't be so easy as he thinks it will."

In the meanwhile the guerrillas could be seen up on the hill making ready to roll the Conestoga wagon and its explosive freight down to wreck the tavern.

As the wagon came rolling down the hill, let out by a long rope, the sputtering of the fuse could be seen. Nearer drew the deadly freight to the tavern.

Many of the Blues were in consternation. But Jack, cool and calm, waited.

He knew the folly of attempting a break from the tavern just then.

The place was fully covered by the muskets of the foe, and the Blues would be completely riddled. It was as cheap to be blown up with the gunpowder as to be shot down in an attempt to escape.

Nearer drew the wagon. The fuse still sputtered.

The Blues kept up a sharpshooting fire upon those who had hold of the rope on the hill.

But it resulted in little, for they were well protected by earthworks, hastily thrown up, behind which they executed the whole movement.

The Blues fired at the powder kegs, hoping to explode them prematurely. Nearer they drew to the building.

Jack saw that they would lodge against the northeast corner. The fuse was burning in lively fashion. Directly over it was a window. Jack stationed himself in this window.

He had resolved upon a daring attempt to foil the plans of the guerrillas.

The wagon suddenly struck the corner of the tavern. Jack, quick as a flash, dove from the sill and down into the wagon, ten feet below.

Before any on either side had guessed his purpose it was accomplished.

He caught the fuse within six inches of the bung hole in the powder cask. With a quick movement he pulled it out and flung it aside.

Then, with an impulse, he swung his cap and cheered derisively. The cheer was taken up madly by the Blues.

The daring work of their young captain had saved the building and its occupants.

"Hurrah for Captain Clark! Hurrah for the Union! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Madly the Blues cheered. But Jack was in deadly peril.

The enraged and baffled guerrillas opened fire upon him. His position in the wagon was one of deadly peril.

Two bullets passed through Jack's cap, one cut his cheek, another grazed his wrist, and he had three bullet holes in various parts of his clothing.

But he seemed to bear a charmed life. The Blues flocked to this side of the building and with a fierce return fire soon drove the foe out of range.

Jack crouched behind the powder casks until the bullets of his foes no longer reached the spot.

Then he crept out, and a rope being lowered he was pulled up through the window and to safety.

The reception accorded him by his comrades was a thrilling one.

"I never thought you would do it," cried Hal. "It was the nerviest thing I ever saw done."

"So it was," cried the tavern keeper, Tom Lord. "Oh, boys, if we could get that powder inside here we would have plenty on hand for a long time."

"So we would," cried Jack, "but better wait for darkness."

"Shall we remain here?" asked Hal.

"I see no other way to do. It is certainly our safest game."

This seemed a fact. Thus far the Blues felt that they had the best of the struggle.

But it was not pleasant to think of being held at bay in the old tavern by a parcel of guerrillas.

It went greatly against their pride. Yet it was a case where discretion was the better part of valor.

Jack talked to the boys.

"It is folly to sacrifice life," he said. "They will tire of this sort of thing. Or at any moment one of our cavalry regiments may come up. I think we will do well to remain here quietly until morning."

"So do I," agreed Hal Martin. The others now concurred.

But this was not to be.

The incident of the powder kegs was a thing of the past. Now a new incident presented itself.

One of the Blues, looking out of a window, gave a sharp cry.

"Hello!" he cried. "Here is something new!"

All eyes were turned in that direction. Exclamations of surprise went up.

Once more a flag of truce approached the tavern. It was carried by Trumbull and one of his men.

"A flag of truce!"

"Perhaps now he really wants to surrender," laughed Hal. "Let us hear what he has to say."

"He can't have as good terms now," said Jack, with a laugh. "Only his neck will save the rest of the band."

Thus, laughing, the Blues went to the tavern door. Mine Host Lord swung it open and Jack stepped out.

"Well," he said, curtly, "what is it now, my freebooter friend?"

"I have come to offer you a last chance to surrender," said Trumbull, with a grin.

"Oh, that's the way of it, eh? What are your terms?"

"Unconditional, the same as before."

"Can't accept them."

"All right!" said Trumbull. "You will have to take the consequences."

"Pardon me," said Jack, suavely. "What will they be? Another gift of gunpowder?"

The guerrilla's face darkened and he shot a gleam of hatred at Jack. His answer gave the boy captain a start.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHICH ENDS THE CAMPAIGN.

"Hardly," said Trumbull, with a cold sneer. "I am just going down to Hornby's plantation to settle an old affair. Do ye know what I mean?"

Jack gave a start, but not a line in his face changed.

"Oh, yes, I think I understand," he said. "It is quite comprehensive. When do you start?"

"At once!"

"Let me see. It is not over an hour's gallop, is it?"

"Just about that. Shall I pay your respects to Mr. Hornby?"

"You need hardly trouble, as I will pay them in person, the same time you pay yours."

Trumbull gave a start. He grinned in a sardonic way.

"I don't believe it," he said.

"Why?"

"I shall leave a sufficient force here to take care of you. You will hardly emerge from this scrape with a whole hide. You will be in poor condition to face me at Hornby's, if you ever get there."

"We shall see," said Jack, quietly. "I warn you that before another day dawns you will hang from some convenient tree."

"Spare yer threats! I may fling 'em in your face later on," the villain grinned in a beastly way. "Yas, the game is mine. We'll hamstring old Hornby and throw him into the bayou. I'll slit young Clayborn's windpipe to pay off an old score. As for the girl, I'll take her into the swamps, and she'll only come out as my wife."

He leered triumphantly and Jack had all he could do to keep from springing at him.

"You monster!" he gritted. "You infamous apology for a man! God will not permit you to curse this beautiful earth for long."

"Don't throw any of that sort of stuff in my face," growled the villain. "I'll settle it with you later!"

He turned and walked away. Jack and Hal went back into the tavern.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the young lieutenant. "I had all I could do to keep my hands off the monster."

"And he is a monster," said Jack. "One of the blackest sort."

"How can we save the people at Hornby's?"

"There is only one way."

"What?"

"We must make a dash! It may cost us some men, but there is no other way!"

"But, when we get there—will they not outnumber us?"

"If we can get there before them we can make just such a stand as we are making here. We can hold them off to the last ditch."

"You are right!" agreed Hal. "I know every fellow in the company will stand by this plan."

And they did. It was a unanimous sentiment that they

should make the dash. The landlord, Tom Lord, then said:

"Boys, it would be madness for me to stay here after you're gone. Give me a musket and a horse and I'll go with you."

"You shall have them," said Jack. "Oh, what is up now?"

A great blast of flame and smoke shot up into the air from the nearest dwelling. The guerrillas were going to fire the little town before leaving it. Now one after another the buildings were fired.

Nothing could be done to avert the destruction of Four Forks.

"My old tavern will go next, or as soon as we leave it," said Lord, ruefully. "I part with all I own on earth."

"It is infamous!" cried Hal.

"Every man of them I capture I will hang!" gritted Jack. "This is not warfare. It is incendiary and murder."

But the Blues had all assembled in the little court inside the garrison house, where many a troop had booted and saddled themselves to sally forth in the days of the Indian wars.

"Ready, Blues! Mount!" cried Jack.

All sprung into saddle. Two of them went forward and threw open the broad doors.

One thing favored the Blues in their escape at that moment.

The clouds of smoke sweeping down the street hid them until they were fully a hundred yards away from the garrison house.

Then like a thunderbolt they hit the guerrilla line at the lower end of the street. They scattered them like chaff and were through in a twinkling. But one of their number was lost.

This was unexpected good fortune, and the Blues made use of it. In advance rode the old scout Jason.

Of course the guerrillas left behind them mounted for pursuit. But the Blues made a good start.

Jason the scout had informed Jack that he knew of a short cut to the Hornby plantation.

"It ought to get us there some minutes ahead of Trumbull if he hasn't too much of a start," he said.

"In any event, it will be time gained," said Jack.

"Yes."

"And that will amount to a good deal where there is so little chance for defence by those at the plantation."

On rode the Blues like mad. They knew the value of every minute.

A horse stumbled and its rider went down. Another sank in a morass. There was no halt.

For there was no time to spare.

It was to be a close call at best. All that could be done was to get there at the same time, at least. Else it would be too late.

Suddenly the forest trail they were following took a turn under a hillside. Old Jason pointed above and said:

"The road is up thar!"

All looked up and experienced a thrill. On that stretch of road was the troop of guerrillas.

They were riding at full speed also. They saw the Blues and fierce yells and scattering shots came down the decline.

But now the roads parted and they lost sight of each other.

Jack in advance was lashing his horse. Now they emerged and saw the plantation building ahead. All looked serene and peaceful in that little fertile valley.

It was hard to believe that it was soon to be transformed to a scene of turmoil and bloodshed. But such is the way of man.

Jack crashed through a rail fence and the Blues followed him. They could see the guerrillas on the other side.

It could be seen that the Blues would reach the house first. A mighty, ringing cheer went up.

It was a cheer of defiance to the mercenary foe. It was answered by a yell. Then the Blues swept into the little lane before the house.

The horses were turned adrift, and the little company breathlessly deployed in the little sunken road. It made an admirable post of defence.

The guerrillas did not check their speed. It was their intention to ride down and annihilate the Blues.

In reaching the scene first the Blues had the advantage. They could seek the defence. The foe must attack.

"Steady, boys!" cried Jack, in ringing tones. "Now—give it to them! Fire!"

Crash! Crack!

The volley struck the oncoming line of horsemen and they went down like a row of ten pins. Horses and riders crashed down in a heap.

Those behind them swung off and were deflected. Another volley raked them in flank.

"Again, boys!" yelled Jack. And again the muskets blazed.

Then Jack sprang up.

"Charge, boys!" he shouted. "Give it to them! Charge!"

The Blues went forward at the double-quick. They met the guerrillas in the yard of the plantation house. They

were outnumbered, but their onslaught was so fierce that the guerrilla line was broken and they fled like sheep.

The battle was over.

The victory was won by the Blues, and they pursued the foe with ringing cheers. But in the pursuit Hal Martin was leading them.

Jack Clark had been detained right at the steps of the porch. He had seen a reeling, savage figure making a blind dash for the house.

He saw that it was the brutal ex-overseer, Trumbull. The young captain knew his purpose.

Jack reached the spot just in time. He hurled himself across the would-be murderer's path.

In the doorway had appeared the planter and his daughter. With clasped hands and white face, Lida Hornby cried:

"It is brave Captain Clark! He has saved us! Oh, see, papa! Help him!"

Jack had grappled fiercely with Trumbull. The ex-overseer was a giant in strength, and now maddened by murderous hate he seemed to be overpowering Jack.

The planter was an old man, but he was not devoid of courage.

He sprang down and essayed to grapple with the desperado. But Trumbull struck out with his right arm and hurled him away.

But that very move gave Jack his opportunity. He drove his right fist with all his power into the pit of the villain's stomach.

As he reeled and gasped for breath Jack clutched him by the throat and went down upon him with a crash. The villain became insensible.

Two of the Blues now came to Jack's aid and the captured guerrilla was securely bound.

Jack arose and staggered to the porch. He was weak and faint. But he removed his cap and said:

"My good friends, we got here just in time!"

What followed baffles description. The father and daughter embraced their brave deliverer and dragged him upon the porch.

Jack would have torn himself away to go to the assistance of his comrades. But they were already returning, having dispersed the guerrillas and captured many.

It is hard to depict the real gratitude of the planter and his daughter to Jack Clark and his Blues.

Chivalrous old man as he was, Joseph Hornby insisted upon their deliverers accepting the fullest hospitality of the plantation.

Lida led Jack into the darkened room where lay the wounded young Confederate captain:

In a whisper young Clayborn thanked Jack warmly.

"I never knew you Yankees were so brave and noble," he said. "Oh, this war is a mistake. When I arise from this bed I am done with it. I will never lift my hand against the Union again."

A few moments later out on the porch Lida said:

"I am very happy, Captain Clark. Papa has given us his blessing."

"Ahem!" exclaimed the planter. "I believe you were right, Clark. The son is not to be blamed for the wrongs of his father."

"You have done the sensible thing, Mr. Hornby," said Jack. "I congratulate you upon possessing a true and charming daughter and a noble son-in-law."

Jack Clark and his Blues could have remained forever at the Hornby plantation and been welcome.

But Jack resisted all pressure, and finally said:

"A soldier's duty draws me away. Perhaps I may be able to visit you after the war is over. Until then let us say farewell."

The Blues rode away the next morning. In their midst rode Trumbull and fifty of his prisoners.

Jack had thought of hanging Trumbull to the nearest tree. But he repented and decided that justice would be better served by taking him to headquarters.

General Grant heard the story, and, fixing a stern gaze on Trumbull, said:

"You are sentenced to die at twenty paces, sir, and it is a merciful fate for you."

By his request, Tom Lord, the tavern keeper, was in the firing line. So died the darkest of scoundrels.

But now the great army of Beauregard began to fortify itself at the Confederate stronghold at Corinth. Grant's army was augmented double by reinforcements and preparations were made for another great death grapple, which was to decide the fate of a nation.

Where this took place, and what part Jack Clark and his Fairdale Blues took in it, we will leave to a future story.

And here, with the reader's kind permission, we will for a time take leave of the Boys in Blue.

THE END.

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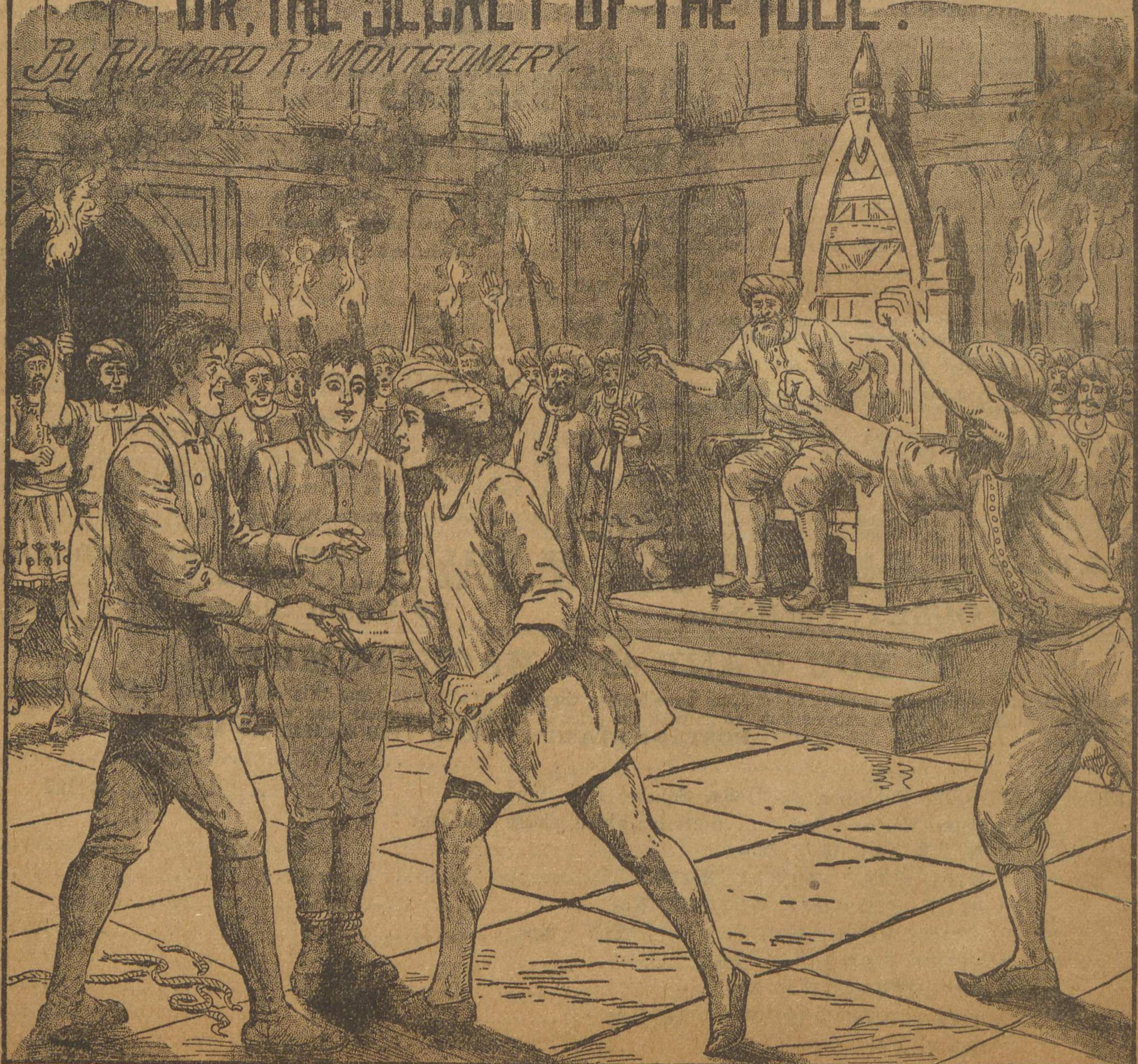
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